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THE BEATLES

THE CHILLS

ELO

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HENLEY**

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4 **Instant Karma!**

Jimi Hendrix, Arlo Guthrie, Richard Hell, Arthur Brown, King Gizzard

14 **Noddy Holder**

An audience with the Slade man

18 **Courtney Barnett**

An exclusive with the Aussie wunderkind: "I don't wanna crash and burn..."

24 **Don Henley**

With a new album taking him back to his country roots, The Eagles' singing, songwriting drummer revisits his colourful career

30 **Kurt Cobain**

Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings – an exclusive insight into the late Nirvana frontman's previously unheard, 200-hour archive

42 **Neko Case**

Album by album with the former New Pornographer

46 **The Acid Tests**

Wavy Gravy, Mountain Girl and other key players recall the Merry Pranksters' infamous '60s psychedelic experiments

52 **Manfred Mann**

The making of *Ready Steady Go!* theme tune "5-4-3-2-1"

56 **Spooner Oldham**

The prolific multi-instrumentalist and composer on working with Dylan, Alex Chilton, Drive-By Truckers and more

41 PAGES OF REVIEWS!

63 **New Albums**

Including: The Chills, Thunderbitch, ELO, Jeffrey Lewis, Guy Garvey

84 **The Archive**

Including: Bob Dylan, Sun City Girls, Van Morrison, John Coltrane

99 **DVD & Film**

Steve McQueen, The Beatles

104 **Live**

PJ Harvey, Stevie Wonder

117 **Books**

Elvis Costello, Lou Reed, Morrissey

118 **Not Fade Away**

This month's obituaries

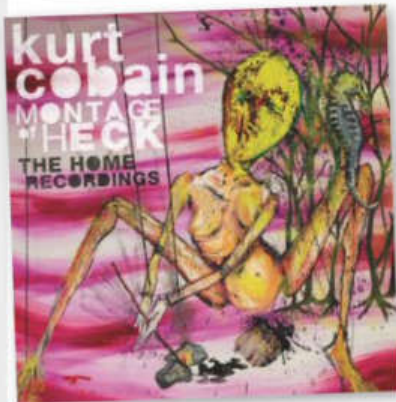
120 **Letters...**

Plus the *Uncut* crossword

122 **My Life In Music**

Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top

Are we rolling?



Kurt Cobain's *Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings*

IT WAS A long time ago now, but I dimly recall part of my English degree involved comparing the various quirks and emendations of Shakespeare's plays in the Folio version and the Quarto version; scholarly anal retention at its finest, I guess. Weirdly, though, I was thinking about that process the other day in the office, while we were working our way through *The Cutting Edge 1965-1966: The Bootleg Series Vol 12* – or at least the 6CD version of this new Bob Dylan boxset that Allan Jones reviews on page 84. It's a strange experience, listening again and again to "Like A Rolling Stone" (there are 20 versions of it here), hearing the microscopic adjustments in tempo, the distinctions

in guitar tone, the presence and absence of organ lines.

I'm aware that drawing parallels between the likes of Shakespeare and Dylan is a hazardous, often pretentious, business, but perhaps this is where we are with rock archaeology right now. Part of the pleasure of expansive projects like *The Cutting Edge* – and, indeed, like *Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings*, the new Kurt Cobain album that we investigate in this month's cover story – is that they turn us all into historical detectives, or at least privileged critics; that the act of listening becomes more active than passive as you become involved in piecing the story of a song together, in analysing its gestation.

Of course, this isn't always the way I'd choose to engage with music, and it'd be disingenuous to pretend I'm going to play *The Cutting Edge* more frequently than I do, say, *Blonde On Blonde*. Nevertheless, as with many of these archival projects, innumerable new angles on old stories materialise. Just when you think you know everything about these most canonical of songs, another take on "Tombstone Blues" is cued up, and a new avenue of exploration reveals itself. Dylan, it transpires, never had a fixed idea of how a song should work; his music has always been, and of course continues to be, in a constant state of adaptation and flux. We might see the single version of "Like A Rolling Stone" as the ultimate manifestation of Dylan's art. Dylan himself, one suspects, would see it as just one of a number of almost infinite possibilities. Which is why he's so perfectly suited to encyclopaedic boxsets like this one.

There are plenty of new things to engage us this month – albums by Floating Points, Kelley Stoltz, Nadia Reid and Bitchin Bajas are strong personal favourites – but until Neil Young finally gets around to releasing *Archives 2*, whenever that may be, there's plausibly enough here to obsess over. It's a question of degrees.

Good luck with your studies,

John Mulvey, Editor
Follow me on Twitter @JohnRMulvey

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INSTANT KARMA!

THIS MONTH'S REVELATIONS FROM THE WORLD OF UNCUT
Featuring RICHARD HELL | ARTHUR BROWN | KING GIZZARD

HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

“Have You Ever Been (To 23 Brook Street)”

Hendrix's Mayfair pad opens to the public. The fittings have been restored – but not the stash...

IN 1969, CLASSICAL music scholars visiting Mayfair would knock on the door beneath George Frideric Handel's blue plaque, hoping to nose around the 18th-century composer's former home on Brook Street. To their surprise, the door would be opened by Jimi Hendrix, who lived on Brook Street for three months with his girlfriend, Kathy Etchingham. Hendrix's old flat – actually at No 23, next door to Handel's at No 25 – will open to visitors in February 2016, having been restored to its 1960s glory by the Handel House Museum, who had used it for offices ever since they opened Handel's home to the public in 2001. The new venture, celebrating this odd time-travelling partnership, will be called Hendrix & Handel In London.

“Jimi and Kathy always believed they lived in Handel's house because Handel's plaque was on the party wall in the middle of the two properties,” explains Sarah Bardwell, director of the museum. “That's why Jimi went to HMV on Oxford Street to buy Handel's music. He had two copies of the ‘Messiah’ and one of a very odd oratorio called ‘Belshazzar.’”

These LPs, along with dozens more from Hendrix's collection including Howlin' Wolf, Acker Bilk and Bill Cosby, will go on display at the museum, the first in London to be dedicated to a rock star. One room where Hendrix ate, slept and entertained will be restored to its vintage appearance, while a second room will be an exhibition space, containing original clothes and instruments, as well as information about Hendrix focused on the months he spent at the flat.

“He first stayed there in July 1968 then went on tour and came back in January, staying until mid-March,” explains Bardwell. “He didn't stay there for long, but he didn't stay anywhere for long. He said this was where he felt most at home, and it's where he was doing a lot of thinking about his future. That's one of the reasons he did so many interviews there – he was trying to review where he was going.”

Those interviews have been a big help to Bardwell's team as they try to reproduce Hendrix's living environment, piece by piece. “We've identified 77 items from the photos that we've been shopping for over the past year,” says Bardwell. “It's very '60s, but not Austin Powers '60s, just of the era. They bought great purple velvet curtains from John Lewis which we've had remade. Jimi also went to Portobello Road to buy knick-knacks, so we've had to find things like boxes decorated with shells and a teddy bear that







Inside 23 Brook Street,
January 7, 1969

● a fan gave him, stuffed with ladies' tights."

Although the £30-per-week flat was rented in Etchingam's name, Hendrix took a role in its decoration, and contemporary reports from journalists list some of the more unusual items found chez Jimi, such as a rubber rat, stuffed panda, large gong, cine projector and peacock feathers. Another interviewee reported a bedside table stashed with "grass, amyl nitrate, pills and three types of hash". These latter items, Bardwell notes, are not being reproduced.

The thought of a rock pad in Mayfair may conjure up images of decadent luxury, but the flat was not large and the area wasn't salubrious; a long way from the Mayfair we know today. "It was quite seedy," says Bardwell. "One local café

owner says there was a brothel at the back and people sold drugs. But

Jimi could play music very loudly as there were no residential neighbours. It was also close to wherever he wanted to go – Soho, Mayfair, Carnaby Street.

You could walk everywhere and people would come back for a jam, as they did after he played the Albert Hall [in Feb, 1969]."

But it wasn't all partying and gigging. Hendrix used the flat as a bolthole from his rock life, as he briefly embraced domesticity. Etchingam recalls evenings at home watching TV, drinking tea and playing Risk – Graham Nash once commented that "nobody could ever beat Jimi at Risk. No-one. Nobody ever. He would drop acid and play Risk, and he was still unbeatable."

Nash's observation points to an interesting challenge for the museum, who had previously dealt with the centuries-dead Handel. "It's a different job to Handel, because this is living history and people who knew Hendrix are still around," says Bardwell. "Hendrix fans want to share their experience, like they are validating their fanaticism, while the Handel audience have a little more distance and respond differently."

Bardwell hopes the audiences will cross over, and visitors will explore the two neighbours' individual stories. "You can get tickets for both, or just a single to see Hendrix or Handel," says Bardwell, who regularly reflects on the cosmic coincidence of having two legendary expat musicians living in such proximity over separate eras. "It's completely serendipitous. People talk about lines of longitude and latitude on which these two greats converge. It's a very London thing and it's really exciting for us." **PETER WATTS**

Tickets for **Hendrix & Handel In London** go on sale November 2. See www.handelandhendrix.org

Guthrie: little
guy against a
big world

DRAFT EXCLUDER

ALICE'S RESTAURANT REVISITED

Fifty years on, ARLO GUTHRIE relearns all 18 minutes of his trash-talking, anti-war classic one more time

FIFTY YEARS AGO this month, an 18-year-old college student celebrated Thanksgiving with friends at their home in Massachusetts and, after dumping the trash from the party over a cliff, was arrested for littering, fined \$20 and ordered to pick up the garbage. The 18-year-old was Arlo Guthrie and from this seemingly insignificant incident grew a counterculture legend. The US draft board ruled that Guthrie's 'crime' rendered him unfit to fight in Vietnam – a decision he welcomed with considerable relief – and the bizarre tale was immortalised in an 18-minute song and a feature film, which become touchstones of America's tormented psyche over the war. The song was "Alice's Restaurant Massacre", which took up one side of Guthrie's debut LP, released a month before the death of his father, Woody, in 1967. Two years later came Arthur Penn's movie, *Alice's Restaurant*, in which Guthrie played himself. Somewhat improbably, the arresting officer and blind judge who sentenced him were also persuaded to appear. Now Guthrie has embarked upon "The Alice's Restaurant 50th Anniversary Tour", a 72-city jaunt that will fittingly wind up next May with a show in the former church near Stockbridge where the saga began. At the time, the property was the home of Guthrie's friends, Alice and Ray Brock, but he purchased the building in 1991 and converted it into the Guthrie Centre, a not-for-profit organisation supporting families living with HIV/AIDS and other life-threatening illnesses, including Huntington's disease, which killed his father.

He stopped singing "Alice's Restaurant" in the 1970s after

the Vietnam War had ended and has revived the song only once per decade since, relearning the marathon monologue for anniversaries. He last sang it in 2005. "As it became less immediate and more nostalgic, I took it off the set list," Guthrie explains. "But it has taken on a life of its own and people still keep asking for it. Why people enjoy it is beyond me; maybe because it's a story about a little guy against a big world."

He continues to get letters from Vietnam vets and currently serving soldiers expressing their connection to the song, but says he sees "Alice's Restaurant" as an "anti-stupidity" more than an "anti-war" statement, although he concedes that the two are inter-connected. "You can't run a war being that stupid," he notes dryly.

The hilarious detail of the song's narrative,

delivered in the witty, colloquial, talking blues style famously forged by his father, has a slapstick quality which Guthrie likens to "an old Charlie Chaplin movie". But, he points, out, there is little or no exaggeration: "It's an absurd set of circumstances. Who gets arrested for littering? And who goes to court and finds themselves before a blind

judge with pictures as evidence? And then to be rejected from the military for a littering record? It's crazy, but it describes what actually happened."

As he brings the song out of retirement only once per decade, at 68 is he performing it for the final time? "Well, I did a 30th-anniversary tour and then a 40th-anniversary

tour. I didn't expect to live long enough to have to learn 'Alice's Restaurant' again for the 50th anniversary..."

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

"I didn't expect to live long enough to have to learn it again for the 50th anniversary"
Arlo Guthrie



Full dates for **The Alice's Restaurant 50th Anniversary Tour** can be found at www.arlo.net/resources/schedule



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NEW YORK STORIES

THE BLANK PAGE GENERATION

RICHARD HELL, scribe: "I just want to put punk to fucking sleep in a piece of writing"

RICHARD HELL WROTE some of punk's most concise anthems with Television, The Heartbreakers and The Voidoids, but in conversation there are many ums and errs as he considers his reasons for compiling *Massive Pissed Love*, a new volume of non-fiction writing. "I hoped I might earn a little respect from it," he eventually chuckles down the line from New York. "I thought it might be

something you don't expect from a guy with my history."

Hell's history often crops up in his writing, as he explores cinema, sex, photography, poetry, drugs and, inevitably, rock'n'roll. "It covers a lot of subjects, but the taste and sensibility seem consistent," he says. He writes about the Stones, Velvet Underground, Lester Bangs and, on several occasions, punk rock. "I end up writing about punk more than I want to," he admits. "People want to talk about it so much but it bores the fuck out of me, so I try to write something definitive. But that doesn't work; I get the same questions. But I have an intimate experience with it, and the years making music were without question a significant time for me. I just want to put it to fucking sleep by sorting out my take in a piece of writing."

There's a conversational tone to Hell's writing, as he thinks things through in print. Hell says, "I like digression and asides and the reconsideration that comes in the process of writing. When I'm reading essays I like to follow the shape of their minds rather than read some debater who wants to create

an argument as forcefully as possible. I like seeing it being turned around, following the course of their meanderings. It's a personal essay, so that's the point. A writer acknowledging that he or she is present."

The music writing is thoughtful and amusing. His essay comparing the Stones and VU was originally titled "The Beautiful Music Of Nasty Little Shits", and he says of Lester Bangs that "of all the most highly regarded rock journalists of his time, Lester was the only

one who seemed to like the music more than he liked himself". Hell says Bangs "was a pest, always drunk and so sincere it was almost impossible not to mock him. But he had amazing virtues and impeccable taste, and he was soulful, which isn't something you often see in a critic."

Aside from rock, there are essays on Robert Bresson, artist Christopher Wool, Nathanael West, Arthur Rimbaud, Orson Welles and Jim Carroll, as well as on cunnilingus, 9/11, the Iraq war and drugs. Hell was a poet before he became a musician and has written several novels since he stopped performing in the 1980s. So was music a diversion from writing? "I don't see it that way," says the man who wrote "Blank Generation" and "Love Comes In Spurts". "It was a medium I took up, which I do a lot – I get curious and want to try my hand at it. While it was happening, I was wholeheartedly there."

The collection includes several film reviews from the past 10 years, but the most recent piece of music featured is Sonic Youth's *Goo*. Hell admits he's lost touch with music in recent years. "I don't really know what's out there," he says. "It's become so diffuse, the outlets for it are so various and sometimes so obscure. But it's the same with film. I loved that period when I was doing the film column, but I am still mostly preoccupied with the filmmakers that had the biggest effect on me when I was at my most impressionable, in my twenties and thirties. These days I'm more interested in painting, but books have always been the core. I'll never get tired of reading."

PETER WATTS

RICHARD HELL
MASSIVE PISSED LOVE
NONFICTION
2001 - 2014

Massive Pissed Love by Richard Hell is available from Soft Skull Press

A QUICK ONE

► If you're looking for some early Christmas ideas, then we'd steer you towards the fully upgraded and updated edition of our **Bruce Springsteen: The Ultimate Music Guide**, available now



in shops and to buy digitally. And the next issue of our **History Of Rock** project focuses on 1969; it's on sale from November 5. Expect the Stones, Zeppelin, Fairport and more... Log on to www.uncut.co.uk for more details.

► Keep an eye out for a new **Arthur Lee And Love** four-disc box, *Coming Through To You: The Live Recordings (1970-2004)*, which includes five unreleased live tracks. Meanwhile, *Love Revisited* – Lee's final backing band, Baby Lemonade, plus Love's original lead guitarist Johnny Echols – tour the UK next summer to coincide with the 10th anniversary of Lee's death. See www.love-revisited.com/tour

► **Morrissey** and **Brigitte Bardot** have entered into a spat with the Australian government, over plans to cull up to two million feral cats to help save endangered species. Morrissey described them as a "committee of sheep-farmers who have zero concerns about animal welfare".

► **Beck**, **Cat Power** and **Jakob Dylan** were among the artists who appeared at Echo In The Canyon, a tribute show to '60s' Cali acts like The Byrds and Buffalo Springfield at the Orpheum Theater, LA, October 12. It was part of a larger tribute project that includes a studio album due next year. Stay tuned for news of that...

Hell in his East Village apartment: "I'll never get tired of reading"

new music



roots manuva
bleeds
30/10/2015

album of the month



bob dylan
the cutting edge 1965-1966:
the bootleg series vol. 12
06/11/2015



ryan adams
1989
30/10/2015



dave gahan & soulsavers
angels & ghosts
out now



jeff lynne's elo
alone in the universe
13/11/2015



teeth of the sea
highly deadly black tarantula
06/11/2015



the brian jonestown massacre
mini album thingy wingy
13/11/2015



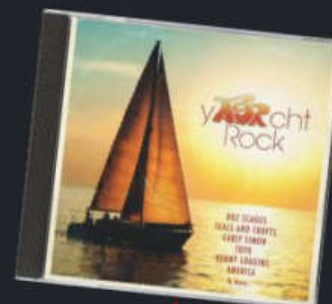
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songs in the dark
13/11/2015



tracey thorn
solo: songs and collaborations
1982-2015
out now



anna von hausswolff
the miraculous
13/11/2015



various artists
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sharon jones and the dap-kings
it's a holiday soul party
30/10/2015

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Arthur Brown:
creating a new
universe

MIND GAMES

"The first person we wanted was the Pope"

Hellfire! ARTHUR BROWN is making music out of his brainwaves. Can he get the Pontiff tuned in, too?

I HEARD THAT some guy has made a hole in his head and put cables in there," says the erstwhile God Of Hellfire with an admiring chuckle. "All the sci-fi stuff is already here." Arthur Brown has always been

something of a technological pioneer, but making 'brain music' may be his most out-there expedition to date.

It's a project that dates to 1972 and the days of Kingdom Come, the experimental rock band he formed in the aftermath of the Crazy World

Of Arthur Brown's 1968 hit "Fire". In Kingdom Come, Brown became the first musician to build a band around a drum machine. He also planned to use the electroencephalograph [EEG], a machine used in medicine and neuroscience to monitor brain activity via the transmission of data waves.

"We were going to have it so that not only did you see those waves, you could represent them in sound and light," says Brown. "The idea was,

'Wouldn't it be great if someone who couldn't make music came on stage and their brainwaves made music?' The first person we wanted to get on was the Pope."

Alas, the Pontiff of the time (Paul VI; not widely regarded as one of the more avant-garde Popes) never got the chance. "The technology wasn't quite there," says Brown. "And the machine in those days was big and clumsy and usually in a hospital."

Cut to 40 years later. The technology has advanced light years, and portable EEG headsets are now commercially available for the price of a good meal. In 2013, Brown enlisted the help of "neurofeedback artist" Luciana Haill and the technology's inventor, Masahiro Kahata. After strapping on the headset, a number of

electrode pads monitor the unconscious movements of the brainwaves, which fluctuate depending on the mood, activity and visualisations of the person wearing it.

"When you're really relaxed, the alpha-beta data waves will come out as blue, calm like a field," says Brown. "When you focus your mind to particular objects or a movement, they will come out as mountains in different colours."

The waves can then be turned into any kind of sound. You can have it as a rhythm, or you can be a human Theremin. It's endless."

Brown, now 73, regards it as a revolutionary compositional tool: the EEG machine will, in effect, directly play whatever you imagine. "If you had a genius who could simultaneously visualise 1,200 sounds, they would appear," he

says. "The step that Mozart had to do, which was remember things and write them down, that's taken away. All he'd have to do is plug in his brain."

He envisions clubs with "no

DJs, no instruments, just the amps and GPS technology that monitor the brainwaves. You walk in and the music starts, as your brain is always working, then your mates come in and you're interlocking. You create your own music."

Brown performed a short piece of brain music at this year's Bestival, as an introduction to Kingdom Come's "Time Captives", and hopes to arrange an entire concert demonstration in the near future. He is also working with it in the studio. In time he hopes it will "create a new universe. This is just the beginning. You could link it not just to sound and vision, but to 3-D printers. Who is to say what is virtual and what isn't?" And yes, he's still hoping to get the Pope on board. He giggles. "Can you imagine?" **GRAEME THOMSON**

"Brainwaves can be turned into any kind of sound. You can be a human Theremin"
Arthur Brown

THE CLASSIFIEDS

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Sunday, Nov

new music



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30/10/2015



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and other worlds
30/10/2015



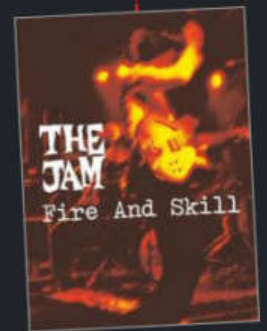
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west kirby county primary
06/11/2015



kurt cobain
montage of heck: the home recordings
13/11/2015



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20/11/2015

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WE'RE NEW HERE

KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD

Recommended this month: the sprawling Aussie freaks who've gone pastoral pop. "My brain was starting to get fried..."

NO-ONE COULD accuse Melbourne septet King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard of laziness. Despite the tripped-out-surfer aesthetic and a fondness for meditative instrumental meanders, they've released six albums in five years and proved themselves a riotously unstoppable live force. For their seventh album (and second this year) they've traded their FX-heavy stew of '60s garage psych, kosmische, jazz-folk and faery glam for an all-acoustic set of mostly pastoral pop songs that tilt at The Kinks, Pentangle and Television Personalities.

Singer, principal songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Stu Mackenzie describes *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon* as "a palate cleanser" before the band's next wiggly, psych-rock effort, due in 2016. Speaking via Skype at home in Victoria, where he's taking time out after King Gizzard's US tour, he explains why that was vital. "When we started on *Paper Mâché*..., we'd already started on the album that is to follow it, which is the total opposite – it's maybe the loudest and heaviest stuff we've ever attempted. My brain was starting to get fried, just thinking about these conceptual song cycles and trying to intellectualise rock'n'roll, which is kind of dumb, in lots of ways. So *Paper Mâché*... was about us deciding to do the opposite thing, so that when we do go back to the heavy concept record, we can feel not bummed out by it. I felt I wanted to make some music that was just songs, in the traditional sense."

The launch point for the album was the title track, written but never finished during the making of King Gizzard's 2014 triumph, *I'm In Your Mind Fuzz*. "We were living in this ski lodge in upstate New York at the time," says Mackenzie,

"although it was the middle of summer. So it was really green and there were deer, bears, raccoons and squirrels all around us. There was a real country vibe – that's how that song came about."

This bucolic feel is conveyed on *Paper Mâché*... solely through acoustic instruments, including piano, flute, clarinet and fiddle. "If you've got electric guitars with all these different pedals and amps," Mackenzie reasons, "you can think about sounds too much. Whereas when you're recording an acoustic guitar, you just put a mic up to it and play. It's liberating, in that sense and it makes you focus on the song."

It was Mackenzie who wrangled with a clarinet for the bossa-toned "Sense". "It took me probably 100 takes to get it right – that's my skill level," he laughs. He's more the demon flautist. Despite its image problem in a pop/rock context, the flute has become something of a USP for King Gizzard and it hogs the spotlight on "Trapdoor", from the new album. "I guess that's the reason I think it's cool. Maybe that's my personality – to do what everyone else thinks is stupid. Plus, the flute can be very beautiful."

Confounding expectation and causing confusion might explain why King Gizzard's last album, *Quarters!*, has been nominated for an ARIA award – for Best Jazz Album. Its Dave Brubeck-ish track "The River" was presumably responsible. "Very bizarre," is how Mackenzie describes the nomination. "Overall, I certainly wouldn't call it a jazz record. But you take what you can get, I guess!"

SHARON O'CONNELL

Paper Mâché Dream Balloon is released November 13 on Heavenly in the UK

I'M YOUR FAN

"I like they're a true 'band', that can rock'n'roll unrehearsed, like a cell – as natural, fun and vigorous as any rehearsed group. It's like watching an octopus in water, on fast forward."

TIM PRESLEY, WHITE FENCE



THE UNCUT PLAYLIST

ON THE STEREO THIS MONTH...

SHY BEN TZUR, JONNY GREENWOOD & THE RAJASTHAN EXPRESS Junun NONESUCH

Greenwood teams up with Israeli Ben Tzur and some fine *qawwali* musicians. The ecstatic, rhythmic sessions yielded a doc by Paul Thomas Anderson.

JENNY LEE Right On! ROUGH TRADE

Jenny Lee Lindberg continues on Warpaint's enigmatic trajectory with her solo debut, channeling early '80s New Order and Cure on the angular "Never".

ALEX BLEEKER & THE FREAKS Country Agenda SINDERLYN

The third from Real Estate's Bleeker. Now a fully collaborative group, Country Agenda sees the Freaks head to the West Coast for some sunny, mildly lysergic vibes.

LUSH Chorus 4AD

A comprehensive box from the returning shoegazers (featuring *Uncut* picture researcher Phil King on bass). Highlights include sessions, B-sides and a sympathetic cover of Vashti Bunyan's "I'd Like To Walk Around In Your Mind".

BLOND:ISH

Welcome To The Present KOMPAKT Eclectic debut from the globe-trotting Canuck duo, taking in techno pulses and ambient experimentation.



DIE NERVEN Out GLITTERHOUSE

The ferocious third from Stuttgart's noisiest trio channels Mission Of Burma, Fugazi and early-'90s Hamburger Schule.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

From Sacred To Secular: A Soul Awakening HISTORY OF SOUL

This fascinating 8CD trove attempts to tell the story of soul from 1927-1963, and inadvertently chronicles the social changes sweeping the US during the same period.

CASS McCOMBS

A Folk Set Apart DOMINO

The nomadic songwriter's alternative history, mapped out in singles, rarities and covers (Meat Puppets, Michael Hurley).

IRMIN SCHMIDT Electro Violet MUTE

Can keyboardist's solo work compiled over 12 discs – of particular note is his opera based on Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast*.

TINARIWEN

Live In Paris, Oukis N'Asuf WEDGE

To document their onstage magic, the desert bluesmen joined Tuareg icon Lalla Badi in Paris last December. Spellbinding.

For regular updates, check our blogs at www.uncut.co.uk and follow @JohnRMulvey on Twitter

VAN MORRISON ASTRAL WEEKS



EXPANDED & REMASTERED
WITH UNRELEASED ALTERNATE VERSIONS



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Interview: Michael Bonner
Portrait: Phil Brooks

Noddy Holder

The Slade singer wraps his Black Country vowels round a wide range of subjects, from Robert Plant's sex life to skinheads and sausage sampling: "I was King Of The Sizzle!"

I'MA BIG one for learning," says Noddy Holder. "I was in a rock'n'roll band for 30 years, and that was all I really knew. When you're in a successful band, you get pampered. First-class travel, first-class hotels. Slade were four kids living in the Black Country; of course we had a great time. But when I left the band, I knew there was a big, wide world out there that I hadn't even scratched the surface of."

At 69, Holder shows no signs of slowing down. Although his Slade days are far behind – but never far from his thoughts – he remains impressively active. "I've written two books," he explains. "I had my own radio show for 18 years. I've been doing cameo roles for TV shows and voiceovers for ads. I get quite a few acting offers, but it's usually decrepit rock'n'roll types – drink and drug addicts who end up floating upside down in a swimming pool." For all his current achievements, the release of a new boxset – *When Slade Rocked The World 1971-1975* – affords the opportunity for Holder to reflect on his other career highs. These include his time on the German club circuit in the early '60s, and more recent accomplishments, including his stint as the face of British Sausage Week. "It's a new string to your bow!"

STAR QUESTION



Many of your song titles had unique spelling, such as "Mama, Weer All Craaze Now", and "Gudbuy T'Jane". What made you

do that? **Joan Jett**

It started with our first No 1, "Coz I Luv You". We didn't like how the title would look on vinyl: "Because I Love You". It didn't fit Slade's image. In the studio, I had the lyric sheet written out phonetically in Black Country dialect, which is how we used to write on the bog walls. Chas Chandler, our manager, saw the lyric sheet, and said, "Why don't we use that?" It caught on and had such an impact. Of course, you got Prince doing it in the '80s, then all the hip-hop artists later on, so we started something. The education authorities got onto us for influencing the youth for bad spelling.

What do you remember of the Midlands club circuit in the '60s? **Sheila Henderson, Walsall**

It was a thriving circuit. You could play five or six nights in places in the Midlands alone. Workingmen's clubs, youth clubs, ballrooms. In the early '60s, you'd play three one-hour sets a night, or two one-and-a-half-hour sets. You had to have a lot of material. And different material for different types of venue. I did my first gigs when I was seven, in 1953. I started in workingmen's clubs singing pop hits or swing songs. Rock'n'roll came along and I was doing Little Richard, Elvis, Everlys and Jerry Lee Lewis. But people don't realise how big a melting pot the Midlands was. Robert Plant had a band called Crawling King Snakes at the time. I used to drive them to gigs in my dad's window-cleaning van. I used to roadie for them. There's many times Robert used to be in the back of my dad's van shagging some chick among the buckets and ladders.

STAR QUESTION



Noddy and Slade were one of my favourite bands, but only after I saw them play live and blow me out of my seat. No-one

sings like Noddy. Not then. Not now. **Gene Simmons, KISS**

When we first went to America, it was like aliens landing. The crowds were used to watching 20-minute guitar solos. That wasn't Slade's bag. We came on and they didn't know what to make of us. But as Gene said, KISS were influenced by us and took what we were doing to the furthest extreme. But we were 10 years too early. Later, glam metal took off. Quiet Riot covered "Cum On Feel The Noize" and it went to No 1. They sold seven million copies of their first LP on the back of that cover. So we went back and had two big hits in America with "Run Runaway" and "My Oh My". I only learned recently that we were Kurt Cobain's first concert.

What's your favourite Christmas song? **Charlie Bird, Pontypridd**

I have a soft spot for Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You". It sounds to me like the old Motown songs that used to be on things like the Phil Spector Christmas album. What do I think of "Merry Xmas" now? It still sounds as valid today. It was written at a time when the country was in a mess, there was a recession and loads of strikes. The country was in turmoil – "Look to the future, it's only just begun." It couldn't get any worse. We're still in the shit today. But people tell me they think I go around the stores in Britain getting them to start playing it in October... That record is 42 years old this year, and I don't think there's a day goes by when I'm walking down the street without at least one person shouting "It's Christmas!" at me. I'm proud of it.

What qualities did Chas Chandler bring to the role of manager? **Terry Quade, Glasgow**

Because he'd been in The Animals, he knew all the traumas of a band working together, and he'd looked after Jimi Hendrix, so we got the benefit of that experience. The greatest thing he did for us was push us into writing. He wanted a songwriting team within the band. When we had "Get Down And Get With It", he said the next record had to be our own song. So he paired me and Jim [Lea] up together. Jim was mainly writing with Don [Powell] at that time and I was writing pretty much all my own stuff. He said to me and Jim, "You two get together and come back to me when you have a



Slade in London, 1973: (l-r) Noddy Holder, Don Powell, Dave Hill and Jimmy Lea



“I don’t think
a day goes by
without at least
one person
shouting, ‘It’s
Christmas!’ at me.
I’m proud of it”



With manager Chas Chandler in Keith Altham's office in the '70s. "He could spot a hit song..."

● three-minute hit song." I was staying at my mum's house in the Midlands, and Jim came round one afternoon with his violin. We had this little ditty we used to tune up to, and we had this guitar riff. I sang a melody on top, and within 20 minutes we had got the song and then the lyrics done in another 20 minutes. That was "Coz I Luv You". We took it to Chas and immediately he said, "You've done it, you've written your first No 1." He could spot a hit song... he was good at that.

How did you end up working with Kim Fowley?

Nick Sharpe, Leicester

This must have been 1966. We'd only been together a few months, and we were playing a club called Tiles on Oxford St, opening for a guy called Crispian St Peters, who had a couple of hits. We were doing two sets that night. We saw this guy who was head and shoulders above everyone – he was about 6ft 6in tall, Kim – propped up with his hat on, doing this weird dancing in the middle of the crowd. He came back into the dressing room after the show. He kept saying, "You guys, you guys, you project, you project!" He took us to Regent Sound in Denmark St for a couple of days and we cut about half a dozen tracks with him. He used to take us around London, we'd go into the bank to get money and he'd say to the cashier, "Look at these guys. I'm telling you these guys project, they're gonna be big stars!" Eventually, he went back to the US. He wanted us to go with him. Van Morrison's Them had just split up and he wanted us to go over and pretend to be Them. He was always up for the scam.

Do you remember where you were when you heard you'd got your first No 1, "Coz I Luv You"?

Julian Grant, Manchester

In those days, the chart came out on a Tuesday at one o'clock on BBC radio and you got the call at 10am to let you know your chart position. We were each in our individual homes when the call came. Once the charts

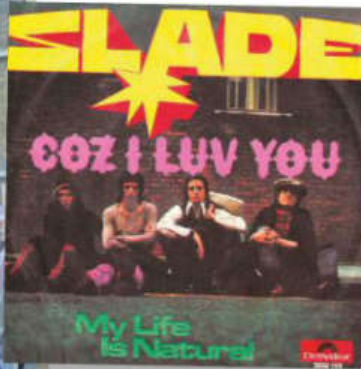
were out, you got the call to tell you whether you were on *Top Of The Pops*. So that same afternoon, we had to drive down to London. We were on *TOTP* first thing in the morning. It happened that quickly. We'd record a single, have it mixed, pressed up and marketed – it could be released in two weeks. With our string of hits in the early '70s, as soon as one was dropping down the charts, the record company wanted the next one out. We were churning out three, four hit singles and at least one album a year, sometimes two, and touring constantly. The turnaround was incredible.

Is it true you nearly made a sequel to *Slade In Flame* with Leonard Rossiter?

Neil Barber, Eastbourne

That's not true. There was going to be another movie on the back of *Slade In Flame*. We were offered a spoof spy movie with The Two Ronnies. We were going to be smuggling stuff in our equipment. But because... *Flame* had taken so much of our time – it took a good year out of our career – we decided another movie was not the right move. Originally, Chas took a blueprint of what The Beatles had done, have a string of No 1s, then a movie. Chas' assistant manager was John Steele, the drummer in The Animals. He came up with a script, a piss-take of *The Quatermass Experiment*, called *The Quite A Mess Experiment*. In the script, Dave got eaten by a Triffid in the first half-hour and all you saw from him the rest of the movie was his haircut and his teeth, coming out of the Triffid's mouth. Dave was having none of that, so away it went.

How did you end up voicing the lift announcements in the Walsall Art Gallery?
Arthur Poppins, Birmingham
They came to me



probably because they thought I was the best-known name that had come out of the town – and with a recognisable voice. I like these quirky, off-the-wall offers. So off I went for a few

hours and put my voice down, "This floor..." and "This is such and such gallery..." It appealed to my sense of humour that Japanese tourists would be in the lift listening to my Black Country dialect. As I get back to the Midlands, my accent gets stronger. I've lived in Europe, I've lived in New York for two years, I've lived up in Cheshire for donkey's years, but I still have my accent. I'm accepted as an honorary Mancunian now. In America they'd ask me, "What's your name?" and when I replied "Noddy", they'd look at me and say, "Naughty? You're from Australia?"

"KISS took what Slade were doing to the furthest extreme..."

STAR QUESTION



Whose idea was it to change image from skinhead to glam? Steve Jones, Sex Pistols

We were getting a lot of flack for being skinheads. In the late '60s, a skinhead look was a fashion thing. It wasn't political at all. But the radio wouldn't play our records, some places wouldn't book us, we rarely got on TV. We started to move the image gradually... at first, all we did was cover it

up. I was still wearing cut-off trousers and braces. We became more colourful at the same time,

especially myself and Dave, and as soon as we did our first *TOTP* it had a huge impact, not only from the music but from the look. But we always knew that from the off, myself and Dave, we wanted the band to have a visual impact as much as a musical impact. All our favourite people had a look. We wanted to make sure Slade were instantly recognisable.

What was it like performing in Germany during the early '60s?

Gordon McLean, Barnet

I was in the wave of bands who went after The Beatles, in an outfit called Steve Brett And The Mavericks. They were heavy-duty clubs, where the waiters carried guns. You'd play six sets a night and at midnight the GIs would arrive and ask for requests. If we did them, they'd buy us a bottle of beer each and a whisky chaser. You had to drink them in your 15-minute break or the waiters sold them on and pocketed the cash.

What's your favourite variety of sausage? Norman, Cheam

This was British Sausage Week. I was 'King Of The Sizzle'! We were supporting British farmers and encouraging people to buy British produce. I went around all of the county in the Sausage Mobile. I had to judge sausages and pies. I'm a great foodie, so I loved it. I got to meet farmers, home producers, butchers and young people working their asses off producing food. I met this one girl up in Newcastle, on maternity leave from work. She'd got bored so she bought a couple of pigs and learnt how to butcher them, make sausages and pies. Within two years, she'd won two major awards. It was eye-opening. You hear so much crap about young people, but never positive things.

What's your relationship with Jim like nowadays?

Marcus Wright, Sweden

We're not pally any more, none of us are. I see Don intermittently. I haven't seen Jim for many years. When I go down the Midlands, I sometimes pop in and see Dave. He had a stroke about five years ago. We have a good chat. We were together 25 years; it's hard. Everybody says to me now I don't know how you got through it. I do regret that we can't get together and sit down and have a meal and have a laugh. But who knows? 🍷

When Slade Rocked The World 1971-1975 is out now via PledgeMusic

UNCUT.CO.UK
Log on to see who's in the hot-seat next month and to post your questions!

HERE WE ARE NOW

Your guide to this month's free CD

1 THUNDERBITCH Closer

A suitably dynamic start, courtesy of the new project from Brittany Howard. Members of Nashville-based bands Fly Golden Eagle and Clear Plastic Masks are aboard, too, with Howard trading licks with guitarist Matt Menold. There are traces of Alabama Shakes' soulful entreaties here, though we love the way it erupts into volcanic garage-blues with an ecstatic climax.



Joe Ely

2 JOE ELY Coyotes Are Howlin'

The dean of Texacana may be approaching his 70th year, but *Panhandle Rambler* shows no let-up in Ely's quality control, tracing the psychogeographical landscape of his home state with deft roots songs. He's been particularly busy of late, having published his first novel (*Reverb: An Odyssey*) and accepted the mantle of 2016's official Texas State Musician.

3 NADIA REID Call The Days

There's more than a hint of Laura Marling about Kiwi songwriter Nadia Reid, which is no bad thing. This pining acoustic ballad also brings to mind The Weather Station's Tamara Lindeman in its melancholic sense of gliding introspection. Not often has inner conflict sounded so elegant.

4 ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS Coopy (Schrödinger's Refrigerator)

Decades after they first split and morphed into Pere Ubu, Cleveland's cult legends celebrate the 40th anniversary of their initial demise with an album of spanning new tunes and a couple of re-recorded classics from the '70s. The low growl of David Thomas, aka Crocus Behemoth, is always a compelling

experience, backed by deliciously murky punk'n'roll.

5 CHRIS FORSYTH AND KOEN HOLT CAMP Long Beach Idyll

Philly and Brooklyn meet on this instrumental guitar odyssey, taken from Forsyth and Holtcamp's second collaborative effort. The sessions were spontaneous and loose, which probably accounts for both the choice of song title and the blissful warmth of the duo's guitars, dancing around each other with intuitive grace and craft.

6 BILL RYDER-JONES Two To Birkenhead

Ryder-Jones's third album since quitting The Coral in 2008 is a series of allusive narratives concerned with, as he puts it, "turning stories into beautiful truth". Recorded at Liverpool's renowned Parr Street Studios (Bunnymen, Smiths, Coldplay), this taster offsets Ryder-Jones' murmuring voice against melodic, guitar-led backdrops that range from light folk-pop to downright crunchy.

7 THE WAINWRIGHT SISTERS El Condor Pasa

Ringed voices, delicate harmonies: there's nothing like keeping it in the family. The pairing of Martha Wainwright and Lucy Wainwright Roche makes perfect sense, especially on this cover of Paul Simon's extrapolation of an old Andean folk tune. The album, meanwhile, dips into songs written by their parents.

8 JEFFREY LEWIS & LOS BOLTS Outta Town

Your partner has gone to visit her mother, leaving you to wither under the weight of feeding the house plants, de-clogging the sink and trying to finish the *Times* Xword.



Jeffrey Lewis

FREE CD!



Lewis has detailed the minutiae of life in vivid, smart detail across seven albums now. *Manhattan*, his first for four years, finds his antic vision wonderfully intact.



Beat Happening

9 BEAT HAPPENING Indian Summer

The pop primitivism of Beat Happening endeared them to many during their '80s heyday as flag-bearers for Washington State's indie scene. Thirty years on from their self-titled debut, new anthology *Look Around* attempts to capture their wilful essence. "Indian Summer", co-produced by a young Mark Lanegan, is a wonderfully baroque drone led by Calvin Johnson's sonorous voice.

10 KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD Paper Mâché Dream Balloon

Leader Stu Mackenzie says that he's always wanted King Gizzard to "be a band where you'd expect the unexpected each time". Hence the arrival of the Aussie septet's first all-acoustic LP, the title track taking a cue from the pastoral imaginings of Syd Barrett and Kevin Ayers to create a wondrous psych-folk tapestry.

11 KELLEY STOLTZ Crossed Mind Blues

The fuzzy, *Nuggets* feel of the hypnotic "Crossed Mind Blues" comes from one of three imminent releases by the San Francisco-based artist: *In*

Triangle Time, odds-and-sods EP "4 New Cuts" and, in his other guise as an anything-goes pop auteur, *The Scuzzy Inputs Of Willie Weird*.

12 THE CHILLS Warm Waveform

Not only is *Silver Bullets* The Chills' first full-length for nearly 20 years, but they clearly haven't lost any of their dry charm. "Warm Waveform" finds Martin Phillipps' five-piece making pop-merry with chiming guitars and a steady drum tattoo.

13 BILL MACKAY & RYLEY WALKER Land Of Plenty

Not content with one masterly LP this year, guitar innovator Ryley Walker has chosen to release a collaborative summit with fellow Chicago-based player Bill MacKay. The pair got together for a month-long residency at local club The Whistler, the upshot being seven guitar duets that, like this title track, veer from sun-dappled folk to intricate raga-blues.

14 SUN CITY GIRLS Blue Mamba

Experimental rock and a crazy work ethic were twin markers for Sun City Girls. Contemporaries of The Meat Puppets, the trio of Alan and Richard Bishop, plus drummer Charles Gocher, issued albums at a steady rate of two a year from the early '80s onwards. 1990's "Blue Mamba" is a fine example of the band's appetite for feral ethno-rock.

15 FLOATING POINTS Silhouettes (I, II & III)

A mighty epic to finish, thanks to neuroscientist and producer/composer Sam Shepherd, aka Floating Points. Various contributors abound as he takes us on a journey that runs from electronic ambience to wordless harmonies to string-laden rapture.

WAGING HEAVY PEACE

From her base in Melbourne, in two years COURTNEY BARNETT has grown from cottage industry to indie-rock phenomenon, her deadpan observations and spiky guitar playing winning fans from Blur to Jack White. “I think you’ve just got to do what feels right, without compromising your morals,” she says. “Maybe something I’m saying is different somehow”

Story: Tom Pinnock

COURTNEY BARNETT AND her band have spent most of the summer in identical portable boxes – the ubiquitous white cabins that are the universal unit of backstage festival accommodation. If her arrangements are much the same from day to day at present, however, they are a far cry from her customary environment in Melbourne, Australia, where for six years she has presided over a cottage industry of self-booked shows and self-released records.

However, since the release in 2013 of her sleepy and witty “A Sea Of Split Peas” double EP, and her follow-up album, the thrashier, but no less wry *Sometimes I Sit And Think And Sometimes I Just Sit*, word has spread about this deadpan songwriter and her explosive live band. She has been summoned to support Blur at massive shows in America, and while in Nashville recently made a single for Jack White’s Blue Series. For a laconic, supremely laidback individual, she maintains a busy schedule, and hasn’t seen home for months.

Courtney Barnett
concert at the Electric
Ballroom, London,
April 9, 2015



THREE DEGREES

THE STORY OF THE CB3

How Dandy Warhols drummer Brent DeBoer's country band inadvertently put Barnett together with her rhythm section

Courtney Barnett: "I kind of knew Bones from when his brother and I worked in a pub, so we drank a bit together. But yeah, we all met properly through Immigrant Union."

Dave Mudie: "We played with Courtney in Immigrant Union for a year or two. It was a country-psych band; it started off with like eight members or something, and gradually went down to five of us."

Bones Sloane: "Courtney joined as the sixth member. Immigrant Union was always these three main guys, and then we were just the [rhythm section] behind it. They were the three Immigrant Union-ers, and then there was what became the CB3. I love 'em to death, they're absolutely insane, but the three of us felt a bit left out sometimes [laughs]."

Mudie: "And then Courtney did her demos and asked if we wanted to back her up. And the rest kind of happened from there."

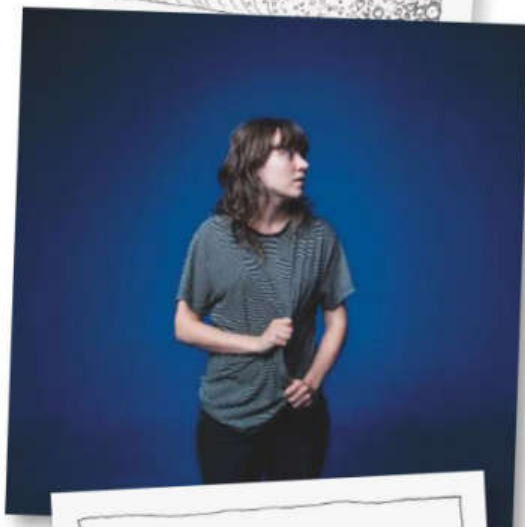
Barnett: "Though we kind of met through playing music, we've always hung out as much as we play. Dave lives just around the corner from me, so we pretty much see each other every day, when we're not on tour. They're like brothers to me; we kind of bicker like brothers and sisters. It's a pretty tight and loyal gang."

"I miss Melbourne, but I don't pine for it," Barnett says. "I'll be home soon. I try to just kind of live in the moment and do what's happening now, so that I don't stress out about stuff too much. It's human nature, everyone goes mental [on tour]. Everything feels multiplied by five, all the emotions and all the adrenaline, so tiny little things send people crazy. After a month, you go to weird head-spaces."

Uncut follows Barnett and her band – "the CB3" – for a few days at European festivals, and promotional commitments, playing for Belgian and Dutch TV. While band members Bones Sloane (bass) and Dan Mudie (drums) relax, Barnett handles the business duties. Just as impressively, she still calls all the shots. Even her Jack White-produced single is a collaboration between Third Man, Aussie indie Remote Control and her own label, Milk!.

"Milk! is kind of like an art project," she explains in her cabin later on. "We just decide what wacky thing we wanna do and work towards it with the hope of making enough money to make another thing happen. It's nice to be able to work that way without thinking of how much cash you can make."

"I met [Dischord founder, Fugazi guitarist] Ian MacKaye recently in DC. I just totally admire his whole fucking approach to life and music and everything. It's kind of cool to be discovering someone like him and all of his bands and his label now. That general vicinity of the music industry is the corner that I would prefer to be in, which I think is what I was aiming for when I started Milk!, just to be able to do things on my own terms. Not to be like some rogue cowboy, just 'cos I just want to make music



without all the shit that people tag along with it."

Another big inspiration for Barnett is Patti Smith – although, again, perhaps as much for her approach to her art and her career than her music. Barnett has just covered Smith's debut, *Horses*, live in Sydney with her partner, musician Jen Cloher, and some friends, tackling two songs each. "It's a really challenging album. But you've got to challenge yourself in life or you don't get anywhere. I try to constantly push myself a little outside my comfort zone, or I'd just stay in my room and be depressed. So I have to keep trying to grow as a person."

W E FIRST MEET Barnett in the artist village at Pukkelpop, a Belgian festival near the sleepy town of Hasselt. She shows us round her white cabin. "This is our little base," she laughs. "It's not as depressing as it looks. We don't normally spend time sitting in here, we're normally outside, as festival sites are so beautiful to sit around in in the sun."

"They don't look too comfy," says Sloane, "but you get to the point that you can find a spot to sleep. Under the table..."

Barnett, Sloane and Mudie have certainly had the practice. In the past two years, Barnett has become better known around the world than most of the Australian

musicians who inspired her songwriting, such as Darren Hanlon, The Triffids' David McComb, You Am I's Tim Rogers and Paul Kelly. Highlights such as "Avant Gardener" and "History Eraser" (from "A Sea Of Split Peas") are catchy, clever and lightly psychedelic.



(l-r) Bones Sloane, Barnett and Dave Mudie at Pukkelpop, August 21, 2015

Her debut album proper, this year's excellent *Sometimes I Sit And Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit*, meanwhile, introduced a punchier, more dynamic sound and expanded her songwriting into caustic grunge ("Pedestrian At Best"), taut short stories ("Elevator Operator") and Crazy Horse-esque epics ("Kim's Caravan"). If anything, Barnett's now revered even more. They're shaping up for their biggest ever UK tour, including two nights at London's Forum.

"I think Courtney strikes so many people because she's a very relatable person," says Sloane, pondering why Barnett has been so well-received. "It's nice to have lyrics like that as well. Most of the music you hear, some of it's really good, but sometimes the lyrics are just like, y'know... 'Take your fucking shirt off, I wanna dance!'"

"Her voice is unique," adds Mudie. "I've never heard anyone sing like it. She also shreds the fuck out the guitar!"

Barnett herself is unsure why she's connected so widely playing such nuanced, personal music, and seems almost embarrassed about her success. "It's a hard thing to explain, because I'm still trying to figure it out. I'm constantly trying to make sense of the music industry, trying to understand things, but I don't think you really can. I think you've just got to go with it and do what feels right, without compromising your morals. Maybe something I'm saying is different somehow."

As well as being taken on tour by Blur, Barnett was invited by Jack White to record a single for Third Man's Blue Series when the trio were in Nashville earlier this year. Just released, it pairs Barnett's "Boxing Day Blues Revisited" with a lonesome cover of "Shivers", originally written by

Rowland S Howard and sung by Nick Cave when they were both members of their proto-Birthday Party group The Boys Next Door.

"It was just the craziest day ever, recording that," says Mudie. "It was like meeting one of your heroes. Jack White's a pretty kooky dude, and it's a pretty kooky house. It's a bit like *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory* in there. He's got a bowling alley in his lounge room."

Though there's no bowling alley in their festival cabin

at the sweltering Pukkelpop, Barnett entertains herself by continually strumming and picking on her new acquisition, a tiny Taylor Baby guitar she bought in L.A. "It's good for warming up before we play," she explains, "cos I fucked my throat up real bad last year, from singing and not doing vocal exercises. I've just been writing all these new songs and mucking around with folk songs."

"I've got nearly an album's worth of country/folk/picky songs that just haven't fit anywhere else," she reveals, "which are kind of coming back out. So those are fun, messing around with that shit. I forget songs so easily sometimes. I'm a big planner, but I'm bad at following through. I'm sure slowly I'll do an album, or something, with them. Sometimes it's hard, songs just don't feel like they fit together with others. But I'm sure they'll come out in the end. I don't know what the next album will sound like, anyway."

Just before stage time, the trio change their clothes (Barnett dons a Modern Lovers T-shirt), and all jump in a people carrier to be driven round to the back of the large tent they're set to perform in. The space is packed by the time they're introduced in Flemish by a man and his young daughter, and duly rip into "Elevator Operator". Even compared with the louder *Sometimes...*, the band are powerful and raw here, with Barnett's playing gloriously ragged on the turbo-charged "Lance Jr", originally from her



Barnett: "I try to live in the moment and do what's happening now"

hushed debut EP, 2011's "I've Got A Friend Called Emily Ferris", and *Sometimes...* Pavement-like waltz, "Small Poppies". There used to be a second guitarist in the group, Dan Luscombe, but since he left last year to devote more time to The Drones, Barnett has taken over all guitar duties – much to the benefit of their performances, as she's developed into a fascinating, primal guitarist. "They've all grown so much, those songs," says Barnett afterwards. "I think it's just from touring, songs grow with you and with the environment that you're in. I've grown a lot more as a guitarist, too, and when I was writing those early songs I was in my bedroom, so they came out quite timid-sounding. Being forced to play as a three-piece, I freaked out. It was like, 'Oh my God, we can't do it,' because I wrote them as these full songs with extra melody lines, but I reckon that forced me to think and play differently, which is good."

Just as she switched from a four-piece to this trio, though, the guitarist is certain that things will change in the future. "I'm sure throughout my life I'll do lots of different varieties of bands, do one of those big orchestral albums and a solo album on piano and all that shit," she says, tongue in cheek but also deadly serious. "Can't do the fucking same thing

WIZARDS OF OZ

THE DOWN UNDERGROUND

A selection of Courtney, Bones and Dave's favourite Melbourne bands



KING GIZZARD & THE LIZARD WIZARD

Shockingly prolific psych seven-piece
Barnett: "They're a

great band. They do like four LPs every year, it's crazy. I first heard about them through my friend Fraser [A Gorman]; they grew up together, some of them. I worked in a bar with some of them and everyone just jumps in on each other's bands. It's nice to go be part of that and share all that stuff."

BATPISS

A ferocious Collingwood rock trio featuring Bones' brother

Courtney Barnett: "We saw them the other week. They're great. Yeah, Bones' brother Thomy Sloane plays bass for them. For a couple of gigs, they opened for The Drones, who are also a really good Melbourne band."



TOTAL CONTROL

Formed by members of the Eddy Current Suppression Ring and UV Race,

these noisy, sinister new wavers keep a low profile on Melbourne's live scene.

Bones Sloane: "They never play. The pub where I've worked is a bit of an institution for bands – so when Total Control play a secret gig, I always get the heads-up. When Eddy Current played there once, it was the most mind-blowing thing I've ever seen!"



THE FINKS

Lo-fi folk collective led by Oliver Mestitz and signed to Milk!

Barnett: "I would obviously

recommend everyone on Milk! [laughs]. The Finks are a great band; they haven't really played too many shows outside Melbourne, though. They've all got jobs and they just play on the weekends and record albums every now and then. I really respect the way they write songs and the way they think."



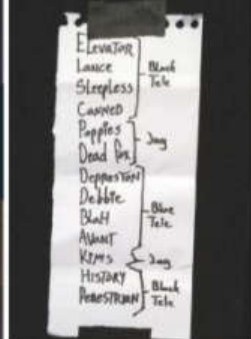
BIG SCARY

This ambitious duo – including Dave Mudie's girlfriend Joanna Syme – are well known in Australia, and are

soon releasing their debut UK single
Dave Mudie: "They're really good. And they're coming on our tour with us in November when we do the UK, Germany and France. It should be cool."



The band onstage at Lowlands and (right) setlist for the gig and bespoke beer



maelstrom of fuzz guitars. However, the CB3 have played the song at so few festivals that they have to disappear into their cabin to practise it acoustically on Barnett's Taylor Baby. Once outside again, Sloane reveals that "Kim" is his ex-girlfriend, and that the caravan, situated on Phillip Island near Melbourne, is actually "Kim's mum's caravan".

After another journey in a people carrier to the stage ready for their 8pm start, Barnett (now garbed in a T-shirt from Melbourne band Batpiss) is given some origami

all the time, it would be so boring. But yeah, I love [the trio] for now. It feels like the perfect release of energy. I'm sure the band will grow and shrink over years of doing different things, like our electronic LP and [laughs] all that stuff. But I'm sure the core will stay the same."

IT'S A VERY Dutch scene at Lowlands in the Netherlands the following afternoon, with the ubiquitous backstage cabins situated next to drainage ditches. The CB3 somehow have two cabins, so they allow their next-door neighbour, Father John Misty, to use one of theirs to house some of his larger band and crew. "We've got our own beer," laughs Mudie, when *Uncut* shows him the Barnett-branded lager in the fridge. "This is pretty amazing!"

While the irrepressible Bones and Dave joke around like the class clowns, clearly loving their trips around the

"I CAN BE A BIT FRANTIC, AND THEN REALLY LOW. I'M UP AND DOWN"

world – Sloane claims he'd love to live in London just for its grey skies, but finds it too expensive – Barnett, at only 27, comes across as much wiser; she's organised, ambitious, self-assured, and exhibits almost Zen-like calm. "Well, that's nice," she laughs when *Uncut* mentions her tranquil demeanour. "I think I have my moments. Jen and I always joke that our cat seeks out my company because of my calm aura."

But I don't feel calm a lot of the time. I can be a bit frantic and obsessive and high-adrenaline, and then really low. I'm kind of up and down like that. It's weird being interviewed or filmed, because there's that part of me that's like, 'Oh my God, I'm so boring! Should I try and be more interesting?' And then I'm like, 'No, you don't do that 'cos that's not you.' [Laughs] It's a long personal struggle. I'm constantly taking photos of everyone and writing songs about people anyway, so who am I to talk?"

"This one's for you," says Sloane, as he copies out set lists for their Lowlands gig later in the afternoon, and writes down "Kim's Caravan" as the third-to-last song; they're playing it tonight partly at *Uncut*'s behest and partly because they have a longer set than usual.

"Kim's..." is perhaps Barnett's most fascinating song to date, an expansive, seven-minute tone poem with little recognisable structure and a deliciously stream-of-consciousness lyric, which builds from a subtle hum to a

FOLK TALES

"MUSIC'S FOR SHARING"

Courtney Barnett on her renewed interest in traditional music

"WHEN WE were in Atlanta on an American tour, me and [Australian songwriter] Darren Hanlon went and saw this old folk singer up in the hills. She was like ninety-something. She and her guests were sitting round in a circle, singing each other folk songs they'd learnt from their grandparents; they were being passed around. And I was like, 'That's so cool, that's what music should be like – sharing songs and passing songs around.' I like that folk tradition of song-sharing, so it's not like, 'So-and-so did a cover of a song and it's not as good as the original...' [Laughs]. I love that if you connect with a song you can share it in your own way and bring it to a new audience and pass the message on. It's kind of the purpose of music, you know? It's nice to remember that now and then."

cranes by two fans. She enjoys receiving hand-made gifts – "People being creative is always a nice thing" – but also appreciated a collection of Haruki Murakami short stories she was given earlier this year, or the mixtapes people make them for the tour bus. "It's so nice that people even fucking think to do that," she marvels.

Their performance tonight is even better than the day before, benefiting from a longer set, a bigger tent and even more people. The baggy "Debbie Downer" is added to the set, along with a louder "Canned Tomatoes" and, of course, "Kim's Caravan", which ends in a storm of feedback from Barnett's white Fender Jaguar.

"Depreston", a tale of Barnett checking out a house in the north Melbourne suburb of Preston, only to find it's "a deceased estate" and then wondering about the former inhabitant, even gets the crowd clapping along. "Nobody Really Cares If You Don't Go To The Party" – customarily called "Blah" on the set list – becomes a stomping glam racket of the kind that would suit Ty Segall, Barnett throwing rock shapes as she wrenches atonal squeals from her Telecaster near the edge of the stage.

The set is so frenzied and exciting that it incites some wanton destruction – not among the well-behaved Dutch, of course, but onstage. As the feedback dies away at the end of the closing "Pedestrian At Best", Bones throws his Jaguar bass high above the stage, and lets it fall back to the boards, neatly detaching the head from the neck. Back in the people carrier, Sloane is beginning to wonder if it was the right thing to do – or indeed whether he should have waited another day, when their tour would be over. "It's only a chunk of wood, Bones," says Barnett.

Uncut leaves the CB3 as they prepare to head back to their hotel in Utrecht, ready for a flight to Cardiff the next morning for the Green Man festival, where tour manager Hook will have to hire a replacement bass for Bones. Then it's a couple of months at home in Melbourne for Barnett before their European tour in November. "It's hard not to enjoy playing music on a stage in front of a festival crowd," Barnett muses, looking back over the summer. "It can be

weird, but then you're like, 'Wow, I'm playing in front of a fuckload of people,' and it's a surreal feeling. I've said no to so much stuff that would be so amazing," she adds, referring to their upcoming break, "but I want to be doing stuff forever, I don't wanna crash and burn next year. That would be pretty boring." ☺

The deluxe version of *Sometimes I Sit And Think...* is out on November 6. Courtney Barnett tours the UK in late November and early December



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OUT NOW



Don Henley, 2015:
"America is
country music for
smart people"

THE TROUBADOUR

From his start in the bars and clubs of Texas to his big break in California, and the massive success of The Eagles, Don Henley's has been a magnificent journey. With a new album taking him back to his roots, Don looks back across his diverse, rewarding career. The heroes (Kenny Rogers). The villains (David Geffen). And, of course, the music: "I'm a country boy," says Don. "If anybody has the right to do a bona fide country album, it's me"

Story: Andy Gill

Portrait: Danny Clinch

EVEN THE SKY is bigger in Texas, a vast blue baize liberally scattered with cotton-wool clouds; while beneath it, the flat, featureless plain extends forever, studded with slender, bulbous water towers like giant map-pins, each bearing the name of the small town it pins to the ground.

This is the kind of landscape that Don Henley grew up in, and to which he returns on his new record, *Cass County*, a country album that reflects his rural upbringing. We're 30 or 40 miles outside Austin, passing the water-tower for Hutto, heading to Don's favourite barbecue joint, just down the road in Taylor, a fading town that seems barely there these days except for the smokey meat at Louis Mueller's, which keeps drawing the folks in from miles around. It's in the high nineties at lunchtime, but there's no air-conditioning here, just a few giant fans that push the smoke around the dark, cavernous barbecue hall. Over the most meltingly tender 12-hour smoked beef ribs you ever could taste, Don chats about his childhood, his hometown, the music that directed the course of his life, his time with the biggest-selling band on the planet, and his return to a notably successful solo career after a 15-year hiatus.

"Ugly buildings, politicians and whores all get respect if they stick around long enough," Henley observed a couple of nights earlier while filming a show at Austin City Limits, wryly adding, "I don't know which of those categories I fit into." It's an unusually droll, self-deprecating tack for an American star to take, but it fits the new album's tone of reflective humility, and its mood of wistful regret for decaying values and lost opportunities. Backed by a top-notch band in fanciful Western headgear, it's a wonderful performance, with the new songs punctuated by highlights from Henley's solo career, and a succession of gilt-edged guests coming up to share a song, among them Martina McBride and Trisha Yearwood.

Don apologises for his own voice's slight rustiness, victim to a bronchial complaint; but thanks to the wonders of American pharmaceuticals, he explains – an eyebrow





The Eagles in London, 1975: "Terrible burgers...!" (back row, l-r) Glenn Frey, Bernie Leadon; (front) Don Henley and Randy Meisner



smirkingly raised at his former reputation – he’s able to appear tonight. For “Praying For Rain”, a climate-change song cunningly placed in the mouth of a small farmer, the guests all reassemble alongside Don, to give the song’s title-hook the yearning resonance of a church choir meeting.

The following night, Don’s back at Austin City Limits to record another show, this one for Sirius XM Radio, and followed by a genial Q&A session with the audience. We learn about the first record Don bought (“Hound Dog”), the first big rock show he attended (a Byrds package, though he was more impressed by Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels), and how, as a nine-year-old kid, he wandered backstage at a Lawrence Welk show to find the bandleader with a pair of nun “groupies”. It’s a relaxed journey through the past to his hometown Cass County, a place “where the Old South meets the West”, which Henley is now trying to preserve. He’s funded the renovation of the town’s old courthouse, the latest example of the heritage philanthropy that previously saw him found the Walden Woods Project to protect the area around Thoreau’s cabin from commercial development.

“I’VE
OFTEN
THOUGHT
OF SONGS
WHILE
DOING
MENIAL
TASKS”

Henley’s a significant contributor to various other charities, and while other celebrity voices may be more politically strident, few are as prepared to put their money where their mouth is. Between 1978 and 2008, Henley was reported as having donated more than \$680,000 to the Democratic Party; and with contributions totalling \$46,000, he was one of the biggest celebrity donors during the last election campaign. Those political convictions show no sign of slackening just yet.

This, perhaps, is the context in which his patronage of Louis Mueller’s barbecue joint should be viewed: support for a small business with a deeply ingrained heritage, catering to local needs rather than global vested interests. As we prepare to head back to Austin, a waiter hurries out to the car bearing his doggy-bag. Like everything in Texas, it’s bigger than elsewhere, a two-foot-square version of the tinfoil trays from your local Indian takeaway. Supper’s sorted, then.

UNCUT: Since your earlier solo albums, the Americana thing has shifted country music back to a rootsier sound, like on your new LP...

DON HENLEY: Yes, thank God! Country music goes through cycles, like pop music. It goes through cycles of shallowness and poppiness and commerciality, then there’ll be a backlash and it’ll go back to more rootsy kind of stuff; and I’ve reached a point in my life where I want to go back to my roots. The Eagles started out as what you might call Americana, country-rock, and I wanted to return to that. All of these kids are doing country albums now, and none of them are from the country, they’re all from the suburbs. I’m a country boy, I’m from the sticks, so if anybody has the right to do a bona fide country album, it’s me!

There’s a very reflective cast to a lot of the songs on the LP. Do you find that you start out your writing career singing about your hopes for the future, and as you grow older, it becomes all about the past? To some degree. Though there are some songs on there about the present, too. I deliberately close the album with a song called “Where I Am Now”, after all the sad, morbid songs about mortality! I mean, “Train In The Distance” is really about mortality, y’know – it’s comin’! – but then I close by thinking that, all things considered, my life is pretty damn good. But this album is more about interior landscapes than exterior landscapes.

Is country the natural home these days for the kind of singer-songwriters who would have been on Asylum, Warner and Elektra back in the ’70s? Yeah, probably; and Americana certainly is. Someone said to me the other day, “I was wondering what this term ‘Americana’ meant, and now I realise: it’s country music for smart people!” But that’s the way it’s moving, because in cities like Los Angeles and New York, the music is becoming more urban, and the singer-songwriters are moving towards the middle of the country. There’s a lot of cool stuff going on in Nashville, a lot of new bands, a whole bohemian thing growing there.

You include a Jesse Winchester song on the new album, and I noticed at the show the other night, the music immediately before you came on followed his “Mississippi You’re On My Mind” with Merle Haggard’s “Okie From Muskogee”, and it seemed so apposite for where you and The Eagles came from: midway between wistful draft-dodger and ironic good ol’ boy. Yeah – you know, when Merle Haggard does his shows now,

he basically gets up and apologises for “Okie From Muskogee”! Cos that’s not who he is – he’s into the pot now [see “It’s All Going To Pot” with Willie Nelson]. He played at a little theatre in my old home town, we brought him in there, and when he sang “Okie...”, he kinda sheepishly murmured, “It’s not where I’m at now.”

I love his duet with you on “The Cost Of Living”, that’s just a killer song. Thank you. I’m very proud of that song, and I wrote it with Merle Haggard in mind. It was a trip getting him to come and sing it, cos he’s a little old and cantankerous now, but he did it, bless his heart... he showed up.

The album was mostly co-written and co-produced with Stan Lynch. How did two drummers get to be such good songwriters? I presume you’re familiar with the old joke about what you call someone who hangs around with musicians... Yeah, what’s got three legs and an asshole on top? A drumstool! I know all the drummer jokes! Stan Lynch and I are just kindred spirits, we’ve both been the drummers in bands, had conflicts in bands, and we became friends way back. We’re soul brothers, we can talk about anything: when you write songs with someone, you have to be real open with them, you have to be able to reveal the real philosophical, personal things, and Stan and I can do that. He’s also got a great sense of humour – he helps inject humour into songs that might otherwise be a little too dark.

I liked the story you told about Lawrence Welk and the nuns. Was that true? Yes, absolutely true, he was strolling around backstage with a nun on each arm! He was squeaky clean, you know, the clean guy. My parents loved him, and we went to see them when I was nine years old. I was really taken with the drummer, and went to get his autograph. I just had the balls to go backstage, nobody stopped me, and there was Lawrence Welk, strolling around with the nuns.



“I WANT
TO GO
BACK
TO MY
ROOTS”



You moved to LA just as LA was turning country back in the late ‘60s. Did you know that was happening, or was it just fortuitous? No, I knew it was happening – even in our small town in Texas, we’d read about The Flying Burrito Brothers and The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and Poco, and bought their albums. We’d been listening to country music all our lives, and playing rock music, so we thought, “Why not combine the two, like these guys?” My band Shiloh had been a covers band; we’d play soul music in clubs, which is where I got some of the hoarseness in my voice. We wore out two Ford Econoline vans, driving all over Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana, over a five- or six-year period. But we heard about that music, and started writing our own material, then we ran into Kenny Rogers, who brought us to LA.

An old acquaintance of yours, Ron Stone, once observed that the whole LA country sound was an entirely imported sound: none of you actually came from California, you were all migrants. No, it was from all parts of the country. The only one of The Eagles who’s Californian is Timothy Schmidt, he’s from Sacramento. I was born in Texas, Glenn Frey is from Michigan, Bernie Leadon was born in Minnesota but raised in Florida, Don Felder was from Florida, Randy Meisner was from Nebraska, and Joe Walsh is from all over the place! He went to high school in New Jersey, but also lived in Ohio and Kansas. So yeah, it was an amalgam of America. And Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young are from even further afield, though Crosby is Californian, I think. So he’s right, it was an imported sound.

Compared to people like Gram Parsons and Gene Clark, whose talent dissipated, The Eagles seemed very focused and ambitious when they started. They were doing more substances than we were, I think.

You spent time rehearsing up in Aspen before making your LA debut... Yes, for some reason, Geffen

DANNY CLINCH

BUYER'S GUIDE

Don Henley: The Solo Albums



I CAN'T STAND STILL

(ASYLUM, 1982)

Don's solo debut was a moderate success, helping

establish him as a singer-songwriter with serious interests – witness his song about illiteracy, “Johnny Can’t Read”, and his media critique “Dirty Laundry”, which predated the Hacked Off campaign by three decades, while also acknowledging the role of reader demand in determining media coverage.



BUILDING THE PERFECT BEAST

(Geffen, 1984)

Roughly divided between one side of wistful ruminations on love and loss –

notably the hit “The Boys Of Summer” – and a second dealing with socio-political issues like US foreign policy, genetic engineering and urban dystopia, the multi-platinum *Building The Perfect Beast* was written and recorded with a host of LA chums, including Lindsey Buckingham, Randy Newman, Danny Kortchmar, JD Souther and a posse of Heartbreakers.



THE END OF THE INNOCENCE

(Geffen, 1989)

Selling over six million copies, this cemented

Henley's status as a thoughtful songwriter able to address adult issues in a range of styles. Dark portents shadowed anthemic songs like the jazzy “New York

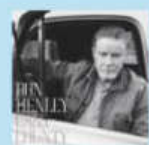
Minute”, the heartbreaking ode to forgiveness “The Heart Of The Matter”, and the classic title-track which, with lines like “Somewhere back there in the dust, that same small town in each of us”, crystallises Henley's enduring themes of love and loss.



INSIDE JOB

(WARNERS, 2000)

Henley's comeback LP in places featured a harsher, more R'n'B-inflected production than before, which didn't always play to his strengths; but it also reflected The Eagles' reunited status through guest spots by Glenn Frey and Don Felder. The most memorable track was the eco-song “Goodbye To A River”, inspired by the John Graves book.

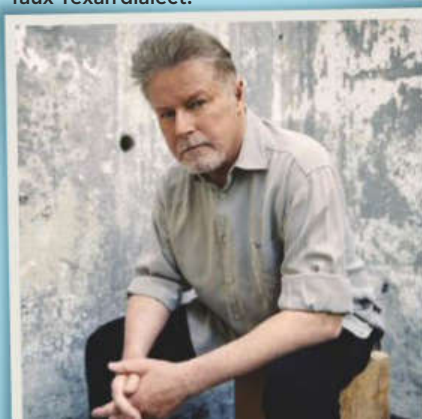


CASS COUNTY

(CAPITOL, 2015)

The shift back to country works wonders here, with

a typically strong set of reflective songs about changing times, supported by guest vocalists including Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, Alison Krauss, Lucinda Williams – and Mick Jagger, doing his best faux-Texan dialect.



CULTURE CLUB

In the 1970s, LA's The Troubadour club acquired a mythic status as the home of the singer-songwriter movement...

“IT'S A MERE shadow now... its glory days are over. It's still there, but they've re-modelled the front of it, so it doesn't look the same any more on the outside; and strange groups play there now. It's not the warm scene of camaraderie it once was. It was a real place of foment for a while, a melting pot, we would all gather there. It was like our church: singer-songwriters would mingle and talk about songwriting and see the acts that were playing inside. You'd meet and hang out in the bar, have a few drinks, then go in and watch the acts, which were all in the same genre, singer-songwriter stuff. Monday night was 'hoot night', from the old folk word 'hootenanny'. It was a showcase for new groups. My group Shiloh played a hoot night, and that's where JD Souther and Glenn Frey saw us play, and took notice of me. It turned out we were signed to the same label, Amos, that Kenny Rogers had signed us to: JD and Glenn were a duo on that same label [*Longbranch Pennywhistle*], and nothing was working out for any of us very well. So JD went solo, Glenn and I paired off, and the rest of my guys went to play for Linda Ronstadt. But The Troubadour was the centre of the universe back then; it's not so much, any more.”

☛ sent us up there. We didn't have much of a repertoire at the time – we were doing covers, and a few songs Glenn had written. But they didn't really care, they were so drunk and so high, they'd dance to anything! Then we came back to LA and tried to write some songs, and eventually were sent over to London to work with Glyn Johns – I think they wanted to get us away from the drugs and the women! None of us had ever been out of the country before, except for Bernie, who'd been on the road with the Burritos. It was a huge culture-shock. Trying to find Mexican food in London... and the burgers were horrible!

The Eagles seemed to be instantly successful – no sooner had your first single and album come out than you were everywhere. Well, it might seem that way if you don't count the six years of driving around Texas in an Econoline! But yes, as The Eagles we did have success right off the bat. And then we followed it up with this artsy-fartsy concept album – it was almost as if our reaction to success was, “We don't want to have another LP with hit singles on it!”

I loved *Desperado*! The record companies hated it!

I thought it was your equivalent of The Band's second album, a mythopoeic vista of America. Right. Well, the people at the label let us do it, but they hated it. I remember the head of Atlantic Records, Jerry Greenberg, who was our distributor then, he listened to it and said, “Oh God, they've gone and made a fuckin' cowboy album!” Because they didn't hear any singles. “*Desperado*” was never a hit for us – it didn't become well-recognised 'til Linda Ronstadt covered it.

The Eagles, Fleetwood Mac and Steely Dan represented the high-water mark of a certain type of rock music with high production values. You always seemed like perfectionists... Mmmm... we did get labelled with that, but we weren't perfectionists. We did strive for excellence, and that's two different things. There are flaws all over those Eagles records, and I could point them out to you. They're not perfection. We just tried to make them good. I just want to do the best I can do, and it's not going to be perfect, ever.

What did you think when you were referred to in a Steely Dan song? (“Turn up The Eagles, the neighbours are listening”). Did you think they were taking the piss, or

perhaps that it was quite an accolade? It was a little of both! I know them pretty well, and it was like he was sort of saying, “Everybody in LA's playing this fuckin' record, and I'm sick of it!” It was a little bit of an acknowledgement, and a little bit taking the piss, because we had the same management – still do – but you know, they're very droll, Fagen in particular. We repaid them in “Hotel California”, with the line “*They stab it with their steely knives, but they still can't slay the beast*”. That was my rejoinder.

You had a love/hate relationship with David Geffen... I think the hate is much stronger than the love!

He called you a “natural malcontent”, which doesn't sound all that bad of a thing to be... That's just him mouthing off, I don't care what he says about me.

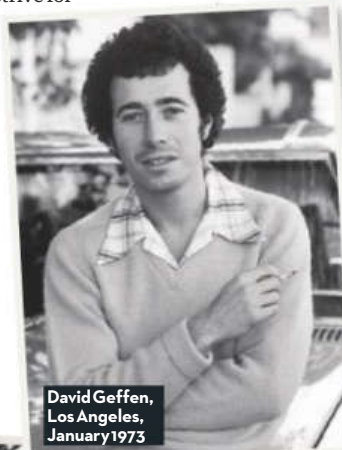
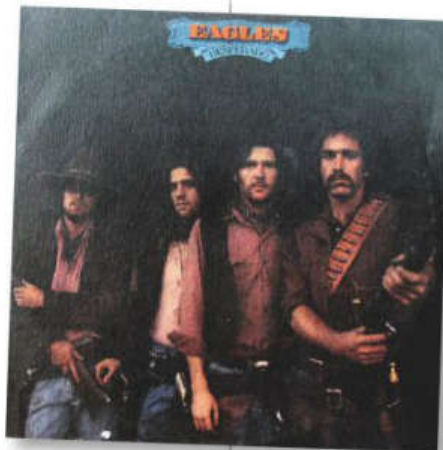
Everybody knows who he is, and what he is. I don't need to say a thing about him, because everybody knows.

It's just a puzzle why you re-signed with him later. Yeah, well, he's very slick, and he's got a good line of bullshit: he came to me and he said, “Nobody understands you like me, I'm still your biggest fan, you know I love and respect your music” – and it was just enough at that time, he was the devil I knew, and so I went with it, and it was a big mistake. I learned a lot from him, about the realities of the business. And at the end of the

day, he did give us a contract, which I appreciate, the fact that he signed us to the label and got us into the spotlight. But then he went and sold the company, and we woke up one day and found ourselves on a different label. I have much more respect for Kenny Rogers, for getting me my first record deal, and getting me from a little town in Texas to Los Angeles, and putting me up at his house: he is a totally straight-ahead, honest good guy, and I owe him a great debt of gratitude.

When you start a band, it's like a gang, done partly for the fellowship; but when you reunite, is it done mostly for the music? To be perfectly honest, it's partly for the music, and partly for the money! When The Eagles broke up for 14 years, we didn't know there were so many people who still wanted to see us play. We were just too angry and fed up with each other: “I'm not getting onstage with that guy again, no matter how many people want to see us!” But when we started touring again, we were just flabbergasted at how many people were turning up. We've been together now longer since the reunion than we were originally. I don't know if we'll ever play together again, we could have done our last show; or we may decide in a year or two to go out and do some more dates together.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a solo career, as opposed to a band career? It's a little tougher being in the solo spotlight all the time, singing all the songs in a set: in The Eagles we get to rotate, so I get to rest my voice between songs; but when I have to get up there and sing for an hour and a half without stopping, it's really tough. I think I



David Geffen, Los Angeles, January 1973



Meltingpot: The Troubadour, West Hollywood, 1971

Henley today: "I have a love/hate relationship with America..."

might start doing what the R'n'B singers used to do, and let some of the background girl singers come up and do solo spots – "Gentlemen, presenting the lovely..."!

At the show the other night, you referred to "the backward island of darkness on 12th Street". What did you mean? It's the Texas Capitol Building. Texas is a real paradox: it's full of wonderful, generous, good-hearted people, but when it comes to politics, they vote against their own best interests: this state is basically run by the oil and gas industry, and slowly but surely, they're taking control away from all the towns and cities. I would not hesitate to say that this is the worst administration that we have ever had in the history of Texas. We went from Bush to Parry, and now we've got this new guy, Abbott, and they're all cut from the same cloth. It's ironic, because Austin is such a liberal town, but the rest of the state elects these people and sends them here so we have this dark, backward little island here in the middle of a wonderful musical, artistic culture.

So, when will you be standing for Governor?

No, no, I like the job I have now! I wouldn't want that job, it's a no-win situation.

You once said that "the creative impulse comes from the dark side". What did you mean by that?

I think it's true, to a certain extent. It doesn't mean that all the creations have to be dark, but it comes from a certain side of the personality. That great Southern writer Willa Cather said, "There are only three or four stories in life, and they keep repeating themselves just as desperately as if they had never happened" – so you just keep expanding on the same themes.

When you're writing a song, if you're trying too hard, can you iron the life out of it?

Yes, you can paralyse yourself. If I reach a roadblock, I'll just go and do something else, drive around, load the dishwasher – I've often thought of songs while doing menial tasks. But I do try hard on the lyrics. I tried to make this new LP very straightforward: it's a country album, and country language is very direct. But I think I made some fairly subtle points. I mean, "Praying For Rain" is really about climate change, but it's the gentlest, kindest way I could say it to the redneck faction here in America that doesn't want to fuckin' hear about it. So I put it in the character of a humble farmer. The giveaway line is, "*Maybe we just took too much and put too little back/ It isn't knowledge, it's humility we lack*".

"THERE ARE FLAWS ALL OVER THOSE EAGLES RECORDS"

It has a lovely warm feeling, like a choir.

I just tried to fill that song with humility: "*Lord, I've never asked for much, and I don't mean to complain*". It reminds me a lot of my father, who never went to church: he'd get out on Sunday mornings and plough the garden with

a mule, that was his form of meditation, his sacrament, and I thought, that's more religious, more honouring the fertility of the earth, than sitting in some fucking building listening to some guy yell at you about how you're going to fucking burn to a crisp. I admired my old man and his ethic. I've been researching my family tree – when you get to be my age, you start caring about that stuff; when you're younger, you don't care about your ancestral trail and roots, you just want to get away from it. And sometimes, when I go home, I remember why I left! I still have a love/hate relationship with my home town. And with the state of Texas. And with America! 🇺🇸

Cass County is available now on Capitol Records

STATION TO STATION

HENLEY'S COUNTRY RADIO ROOTS

"MY DAD AND I used to listen to country in the car, a station called KWKH in Shreveport, Louisiana. Back in those days there were about four national radio programmes like the Grand Ole Opry, called radio barn-dance programmes. I think there was one in Virginia, one in Missouri or Arkansas, the Opry in Nashville, and there was the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport. The Opry was 'proper', and they wouldn't allow Hank Williams on as he was too much of a bad one, so he went down to the Louisiana Hayride. Same thing with Johnny Cash, he was too much of a bad boy. And George Jones – anyone who had too much to do with drugs or drink, they didn't want them up there. And Elvis – he was too radical, so he made his first appearance on the Louisiana Hayride. Its heyday was from 1948 to about 1961. I've heard they're going to revive it, as the building is still there, a beautiful old place. Me and my dad would listen to that programme, and that's where I got my country-music education. So this is one of those life-circle things, coming back to where I started."



“You get the sense he’s working in a laboratory”

When Kurt Cobain died, he left a revelatory 200-hour audio archive. Now, *Uncut* gets an exclusive insight into this unheard material, and the light it casts on the Nirvana frontman: a writer of spine-chilling songs, but also someone who excelled at “jerking your chain”. “Kurt was an artist with a capital A,” says *Montage Of Heck* director Brett Morgen. “He was constantly creating”

Story: Louis Pattison | Photograph: Michel Linssen

“I don’t mean to stare”: recording in Hilversum, Holland, 1991



"I think I'm dumb/
Maybe just happy":
Seattle, 1993

THE VOICE IS familiar, eerily so – young, male, rather earnest but spiked with just a sliver of mischief. You’ve definitely heard it before somewhere – but never quite like this. The spools of the tape machine trundle lazily

round and round as the voice relates a tale, carefully rehearsed, or read from the spidery script of a battered journal. It’s a monologue about a lonely, horny boy from a broken home – a regular Holden Caulfield who feels alienated from his parents, his “wicked stepmom” and the macho bullies at school, and who chooses to find his solace in rock’n’roll, weed and casual vandalism. At it unfolds, the story takes a grotesque turn. The boy, deeply depressed, decides to end it all – but first he plans to lose his virginity, and without better options decides he’ll lose it to an obese, illiterate girl from a nearby neighbourhood. But he can’t complete the job – and then the girl tells her dad, and before long the school bullies know all about it, too. “I couldn’t handle the ridicule,” reads the voice. “So I got high and drunk, I walked down to the train tracks and laid down and put two big pieces of cement on my chest and legs and waited

for the 11 o’clock train. The train came closer and closer... and it went on the next track beside me, instead of over...”

The track is called “Aberdeen”, and the voice, of course, belongs to Kurt Cobain – recorded solo, at home, to cassette tape at some point in the late ’80s. “Aberdeen” appears in *Montage Of Heck*, the Cobain documentary released earlier this year; it can also be found on *Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings*, a 31-track double album that winds together songs, monologues, tape experiments and other ephemera from the estimated 200 hours of audio that director Brett Morgen and his team logged while assembling the film.

“People came up to me after the film saying, who was that actor?” laughs Morgen at his home in Queens, New York. “It’s a weird comment, after you’ve seen the film – as if there was just this one scene in which we used an actor. But it’s funny – listen to the way Kurt reads that. He’s using a voice that does not exist in any of his materials, in any interview or any song. He’s performing that piece. In a lot of his spoken word, he’s reading it off paper and laughing it off. But that piece – he’s really invested in it. The first time I heard it, it had an impact on me on several levels. The thoughts were going through my head: ‘Why does this exist, when did he do this, why did he do this?’ Then it was the shock of him discussing this adolescent suicide attempt. But it wasn’t until I had evaluated all the archives that I realised the true significance



of that tape. It wasn't that he had discussed that suicide attempt – it was the reason *why* he did it.”

“Aberdeen” is just one of the riches Morgen and his team truffled out during their visits to the Cobain archive. Morgen says that initially he was somewhat underwhelmed. “It’s not an archive in a traditional sense,” Morgen reveals. “If you go to the Rolling Stones archive, you enter a refrigerated room the size of four football fields. There’s a room with props, there’s a room where they keep all their masters, there’s a film vault...” Cobain’s archive, located in Los Angeles, was rather less flashy: just 22 or 23 cardboard boxes piled in the clean room in an anonymous storage facility, placed on industrial carpets and illuminated by fluorescent lights. But as Morgen and his team started digging through these boxes, things rapidly became rather more interesting. Much of this audio material appeared to have lain untouched since Cobain’s death, and not all of it was clearly marked. Some of the material, says Morgen, could be identified by the songs it was located near. But to help categorise the material, Morgen worked with Cobain’s younger sister, Kim. “Kim was the first person to log all the audio,” says Morgen. “We assigned her to deconstruct what the provenance of this material was.”

It quickly became clear that Morgen’s team had their work cut out. “When I entered the storage facility for the first time to start going through the material, people had told me there would be art and Kurt’s journals, but no-one had told me anything about audio,” says Morgen. “And so my first day, I found a box labelled ‘cassettes’. I opened it up and there were maybe 107 or 108 cassettes, for the most part unmarked. I had no idea if they were rehearsals; I had no idea what they might contain.”

BRETT MORGEN HAS been living in Kurt Cobain’s head for some time now. The seeds of *Montage Of Heck* were sewn back in 2007 when Courtney Love contacted the Oscar-nominated director, having seen and enjoyed *The Kid Stays In The Picture*, Morgen’s 2002 biopic of Hollywood producer Robert Evans. Love’s offer was a tantalising one: to make the official film about Cobain, making use of the family’s personal archive. The project was a slow starter, but while on the promo trail for *Crossfire Hurricane*, his 2012 documentary about The Rolling Stones, Morgen started talking about how the project was coming along, selling it as a mix of animation and live action, and comparing it to Pink Floyd’s *The Wall*. Subsequently, the project has grown considerably.

Montage Of Heck did not end with the release of the documentary itself. First there was a hardback book, released in May, which extended the interviews from the film along with additional artwork and personal letters.

RAW GRUNGE

NIRVANA:
THE BOOTLEGS

Demos, covers, live shows – best of the black-market releases

OUTCESTICIDE:
IN MEMORY OF
KURT COBAIN

BLUE MOON, 1994

The first in the best-known Nirvana bootleg series lines up demos of *Bleach* cuts with Dale Crover on drums, covers of KISS, The Wipers and The Velvet Underground and, somewhat morbidly, Krist Novoselic and Courtney Love’s eulogies from Cobain’s funeral.



INTO THE BLACK

TRIBUTE, 1994

Unbelievably lavish by bootleg standards, this monstrous collection assembles 116 tracks over six

CDs, housed in a glossy box. Includes the 1992 Reading Festival show, a soundboard recording from a 1991 Halloween show, and a recording of Nirvana’s last gig, at the Seattle Center Arena in January 1994.

A SEASON IN
HELL PART ONE

BANZAI, 1994

Three-CD box, primarily of interest for disc one: an audience recording captured at The Off Ramp Café in Seattle in 1990. It’s Grohl’s ninth show with the band, but they’re on fire, with an early “Aneurysm” and a cover of the Velvets’ “Here She Comes Now” and numerous rarities.

OUTCESTICIDE II:
THE NEEDLE & THE
DAMAGE DONE

BLUE MOON, 1995

Grab-bag of acoustic sessions and soundboard recordings, including an early “Pennyroyal Tea”, covers of The Who’s “Baba O’Riley” and a parodic “The End” by The Doors, plus a sketchy recording of “... Teen Spirit” in Brazil featuring, improbably, Flea on trumpet.



“My first thoughts were: ‘When did he do this, why did he do this?’”

BRETT MORGEN

And now this month comes *Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings*, itself available in several formats: the 31-track edition and a 13-track CD containing just the songs. “But when I refer to the album, I’m only talking about the ‘deluxe’ version,” Morgen points out. “I have very little awareness or interest in the non-deluxe. I’ve put together the deluxe; the other is an excerpt. So when I refer to the album, I’m referring to the former.”

Evidently, Morgen’s great achievement is rationalising the heft of material in the archive. Initially, with little in the way of clear signposts, Morgen made the decision to capture everything, setting up two Pro Tools stations in the clean room and beginning the onerous task of transferring 200 hours of cassette audio into digital. “The general rule – because we’re dealing with archival components – was that we would transcribe and break down the contents at

EYEWITNESS!

MONTAGE OF HECK: THE MIXTAPE

Inside Kurt's very own "Revolution No 9"

AMONG THE 200 hours of cassette recordings that Brett Morgen logged while exploring the Kurt Cobain archives, it seems likely that there is nothing as odd as *Montage Of Heck* – the mixtape that gives Morgen's film its name. Reportedly recorded in 1988, the year Kurt turned 21, it's closer to a piece of *musique concrète* or sound collage than a traditional mix, mashing together home recordings, snippets of Nirvana songs, manipulated radio recordings, the sound of Cobain retching, and music samples culled from his extensive record collection. It apparently exists in two versions – 36 minutes and eight minutes, the latter of which appears on *The Home Recordings*. The full 36-minute piece can be found on YouTube.

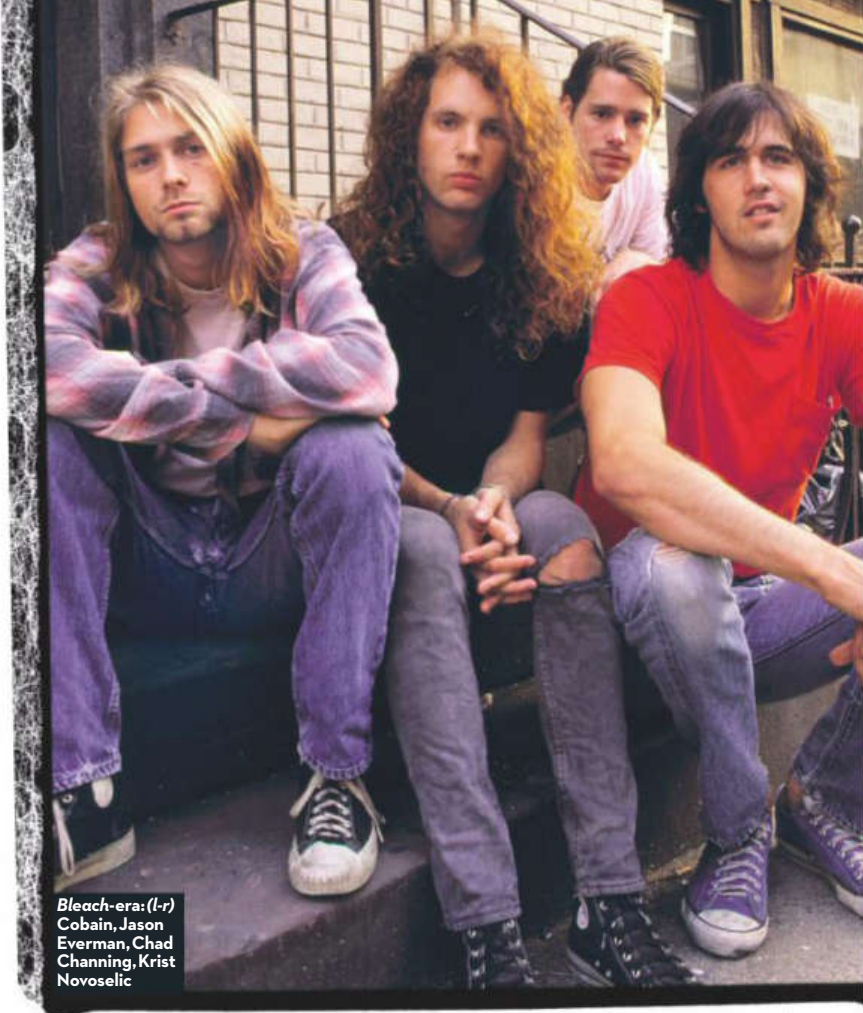
Among the sounds and music found within are: **SIMON & GARFUNKEL** *The Sound Of Silence*, **THE BEATLES** *Being For The Benefit Of Mr Kite!*, **THE JACKSON FIVE** *ABC*, **GEORGE MICHAEL** *I Want Your Sex*, **BUTTHOLE SURFERS** *The Shah Sleeps In Lee Harvey's Grave*, **MIKE LOVE** talking about transcendental meditation, **JIMI HENDRIX** speaking at the Monterey Pop Festival. Excerpts of **PAUL STANLEY** from KISS' *Alive!*, Outsider musician **DANIEL JOHNSTON** screaming about Satan.

“a later date,” he says. “But to transfer it, we made a commitment we would transfer the tape in its entirety, whether there was something on it, or it was just a blank tape. We were not going to press ‘stop’ anywhere along the way. One of my assistants and myself monitored the material as it was being transferred.” Well-acquainted with Nirvana's back catalogue, the director was shocked by the amount of unfamiliar material. “It became quickly clear there was a substantial amount that had not been heard. Of the 200 hours of material I encountered, around 185 had not been heard in any way shape or form, as bootlegs, or as anything else.”

Morgen says the idea for an accompanying album only came as late as February of this year. He had just returned from Germany, where *Montage Of Heck* had just made its European premiere at the Berlin Film Festival, was trawling through his hard drive and started listening through a folder of audio files – pieces that he'd set aside for the film's score. “Listening to it, I realised there was a tremendous amount of fantastic and worthwhile material,” he says. Soon, he was piecing it together into a sort of chronology. “So eventually I reached out to the manager of the estate, like: ‘Listen, there might be some stuff here you want to do something with.’ And that was really where this started from.”

SINCE KURT COBAIN'S suicide at his home in Seattle in April 1994, he has become a cult, his image sanctified, and the events of his life the stuff of myth, legend – conspiracy theory, even. For Nirvana obsessives or even the merely curious, *Montage Of Heck: The Home Recordings* will be fascinating. A peculiar mix of the familiar and the strange, the playful and the bizarre, in places it veers close to the many Nirvana bootlegs in existence, or the additional material dug up for previous posthumous releases such as the 2004 collection *With The Lights Out*. But Morgen is quick to point out this is not a Nirvana collection, but something more intimate. It will, he promises, feel “like you're kind of hanging out with Kurt Cobain on a hot summer day in Olympia, Washington as he fiddles about”.

Just like *Montage Of Heck: The Movie*, *The Home Recordings* offers a glimpse of the real Cobain; its blend of angst, earnestness and mischief familiar, but told from a new, close angle. There are early demos of well-known songs like “Been A Son” and “Sappy” – often mere sketches, with the lyrics half-finished – and there are alternate takes on familiar rarities, such as the pitched-up nonsense song “Beans”, which made its debut on *With The Lights*



Bleach-era: (l-r) Cobain, Jason Everman, Chad Channing, Krist Novoselic

Out. Elsewhere, the material is unfamiliar and unexpected. There is a sombre, straight acoustic cover of The Beatles' “And I Love Her”. There are spoken-word pieces like “Sea Monkeys” and the fast-rapped “Rhesus Monkey” that revel in surrealistic, free-associating imagery (“Sea monkeys are brine shrimp... the tooth fairy is your mom... Paula Abdul is a sea monkey...”). “1988 Capitol Lake Jam Commercial” is a home-recorded commercial for an upcoming show that finds Cobain

speeding up his voice and slowing it down to approximate a conversation. Then there are “The Happy Guitar”, “Retreat” and “Letters To Frances”, which find him playing solo and acoustic in a jaunty, rambling fashion more akin to some young John Fahey disciple than any distortion-loving grunge rocker.

“I was amazed at how much quote-unquote film score existed within these tapes – by which I mean music Kurt created that could be used for a film score,” says Morgen. “A lot of the pieces we used, like ‘Letters To Frances’ – I’m not even sure people watched the film and thought necessarily: ‘Oh, that was Kurt playing.’ I monitored social media

around the film pretty closely and no-one really ever mentioned the score components. It was in no review, no journalist ever asks about it. But in both ‘Retreat’ and ‘Letters To Frances’, that’s Kurt playing acoustic guitar in a way unlike we’ve ever heard Kurt playing acoustic guitar – from both a technical standpoint and, I think, an emotional standpoint.”

Elsewhere, there are tantalising nuggets of songs embarked upon and often prematurely curtailed. During a gloomy reverie named “Burn The Rain”, Kurt is interrupted by the ring of a house phone, and gets up to tell someone that his girlfriend has gone to work.

“It feels like you're kind of hanging out with Kurt as he fiddles about”

BRETT MORGEN



A 12-minute medley around the song “Do Re Mi” is thought to date from around 1991 (Morgen says it appeared on a tape next to “Old Age” and “Opinions”, two tracks that appeared on *With The Lights Out*). “Poison’s Gone”, from late in the collection, is a meaty rocker on some loping Nirvana chords that you can easily imagine fleshed out by a full band. And Morgen confesses a soft spot for “Bright Smile”, a curious semi-acoustic piece employing curious eastern tunings: “Clearly Kurt was not intending that to be a Nirvana song; it has no relation to Nirvana’s recorded music. But again, it’s pure Kurt: it’s funny, it’s harrowing, it’s all these things mashed up...”

Also of note is a rambling electric guitar demo split into distinct sections, entitled “You Can’t Change Me/Burn My Britches/Something In The Way”. “That track is fucking crazy, man!” laughs Morgen. “It’s like an opera, you know what I mean? He starts off on this one thing, goes into another track – and you’re like OK, he’s just making collages here. But then he goes back to the motif of the first track, and you realise all this shit is interwoven. And then ‘Something In The Way’ pops up – I remember being like, *what?*”

Still, in many ways the real revelation of *The Home Recordings* is very experimental pieces, a reminder that Cobain was as much a fan of San Francisco sound collagists Negativland as The Beatles or Black Sabbath. “Scream” is a shrill vocal piece made with loop pedals, while “Reverb Experiment” is a heavy drone composition that faintly recalls the zoned-out guitar minimalist that Cobain’s friend Dylan Carlson was recording as Earth. “These are audio studies that Kurt created that would never have had a place on a Nirvana album,” says Morgen. “But that’s just because he was operating with different creative approaches to audio, be it spoken word or tape collage.”

The oddest track, though, is the one that lends *Montage Of Heck* its name – a collage made on a two-track recorder that melds together tape echo, sped-up voices, growls and roars and demented song fragments: “*And I love Joan Baez... and Bob Dylan too...*” All assembled with trigger finger on the pause button, it’s like a mad cross between William Burroughs, Jive Bunny and *Ren & Stimpy*. “He made it using records, some TV, and random sounds he recorded,” Cobain’s former girlfriend Tracy Marander, also one of the talking heads in *Montage Of Heck*, told *The Guardian*, when the track surfaced online last year. “He may have been stoned during part of it, but he didn’t smoke every day, at least not at that point – too broke. He made a few others, but mostly just complete songs with a few oddities thrown in.” It’s unlike anything else on *The Home Recordings* or, for that matter, in Nirvana’s catalogue – but in its wild, weird mischief, is Cobain to the core.

OLYMPIA WAS WHERE Cobain’s home-recording habit appears to have begun in earnest.

Around 1987, he was living with Marander in her apartment in the Washington State capital. At the same time, Olympia’s underground rock scene was in bloom, in large part thanks to the actions of Calvin Johnson, whose indie-pop trio Beat Happening and label, K Records, were at the centre of what Johnson called “the International Pop Underground”.

“Calvin would visit garage sales and buy old analogue recording gear that people really didn’t want,” says Bruce Pavitt, founder of Sub Pop Records. “The way K operated, they’d invite artists in, lend them a four-track, say: ‘You buy the tape, and we’ll put it out.’ What Calvin was doing was

EYEWITNESS!

“THAT BOY FROWNS FOR NO GOOD REASON”

The day Kurt met William Burroughs

KURT COBAIN NEVER released a spoken-word record in his lifetime, but he did play on one.

A long-time fan of William Burroughs, Cobain contacted the counterculture author – then in his eighties – in 1992, suggesting a collaboration. Cobain had wanted Burroughs to appear in Nirvana’s “Heart Shaped Box” video. Burroughs wasn’t interested, but sent Cobain a reading of a story originally published in his *Exterminator!* collection in 1973 – a tale of a junkie searching for a fix – and to accompany it Cobain recorded a squall of guitar noise. It was released as a 10in called *The “Priest” They Called Him* on Tim/Kerr Records in July 1993, but the pair wouldn’t meet until that October, when Nirvana’s tour manager Alex MacLeod took a detour during the *In Utero* tour to swing by Burroughs’ place in Kansas.



William Burroughs in 1993 and, inset left, his collaboration with Cobain (sleeve shows Krist Novoselic as the “Priest”)

The pair exchanged presents: Burroughs gave Cobain a painting,

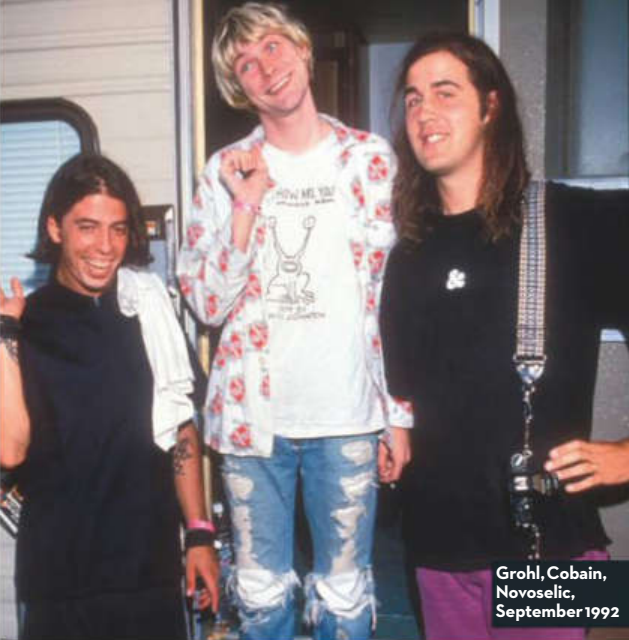
while Cobain gave him a Lead Belly biography that he had signed. “Cobain was very shy, very polite, and obviously enjoyed the fact that I wasn’t awestruck at meeting him. There was something about him, fragile and engagingly lost,” recalled Burroughs in Christopher Sandford’s Cobain biography. As the pair departed, Burroughs was reported to have remarked to his assistant. “There’s something wrong with that boy; he frowns for no good reason.”

Surfing Kurt: in concert, November 1991



similar to what Warhol was doing at the Factory – he established a creative environment that attracted creative people – so you’d have people making T-shirts, silk-screening posters, and recording music and so forth. It was super-low budget, and yet there was a lot of creativity that came out of there. And Kurt was very influenced by Calvin Johnson’s taste in music – that deep respect for the DIY, low-budget outsider aesthetic.”

Beat Happening was at the same time utterly punk and light years from



Grohl, Cobain, Novoselic, September 1992

● conventional punk mores. Johnson's fey, shimmying dance and child-like lyrics about star-crossed love affairs, set to ultra-primitive arrangements, were the polar opposite of the muscle-flexing hardcore popular at the time. "They were very confrontational, in a twee sort of way," recalls Pavitt. "For Beat Happening to do shows with Fugazi or Black Flag took a lot of courage – there was heckling, objects were thrown. I believe that's one of the reasons why Kurt had a K Records tattoo on his arm. It was a new take on punk."

"It opened up new doors to music I hadn't heard before," recalled Cobain of Beat Happening's 1988 album *Jamboree* in Michael Azzerad's *Come As You Are*. "It made me realise that for years I hadn't looked back on my childhood. I tried to forget about it. It made me look back at my childhood and have fond memories of it... it was just a nice reminder of innocence."

Cobain absorbed all this by osmosis, even if a combination of introversion and poverty ensured he was far from the scene's most visible member. "Kurt was a recluse," says Pavitt. "I remember around 1990, I went down to Olympia to visit Calvin Johnson. I said, 'Have you seen Kurt around?' And he said, 'He's been in town for six months and I'm yet to see him once.' And what you need to realise is, this is a friend of Kurt. I remember going down to visit him in Olympia once and all his curtains were shut. He said, 'I stay up all night and watch infomercials and I sleep in the day...' He really wasn't very social." While the cool kids partied, for much of the time, Cobain wrote letters, painted, and made music.

There is much to suggest that Cobain's enthusiasm for home recording stretched beyond mere necessity: he was into it as a DIY aesthetic, too. Even after Nirvana's success, he remained a vocal fan of underground and DIY groups, being photographed in a T-shirt illustrated by the outsider musician Daniel Johnston, and taking the likes of Half Japanese – the caterwauling, utterly uncommercial Maryland art-punks helmed by brothers Jad and David Fair – out on tour.

"It was funny, I had a show up in Toronto. I was staying at a hotel and I bought a copy of *Spin* magazine at the store in the lobby," Jad Fair tells *Uncut*. "There was an interview in it with Kurt Cobain – this was a little bit before *In Utero* – and in the interview he said Nirvana were going to be going on tour, and Breeders and Half Japanese would be opening. Which was the first I heard anything about it! So I called my booking agent, and she'd just been contacted."

Half Japanese played six dates with Nirvana, around large middle-American college halls, to armies of teenagers. "The first show we did, we played some fast songs, and also some slow ones," says Fair. "Whenever we played a fast song, it went down great, and when we played slow songs, they bombed. So for the rest of the dates we only played fast songs!"

THE FALLOUT

"THE MUPPETS RAPED KURT'S MEMORY!"

The battle over the Cobain estate

FOLLOWING COBAIN'S DEATH, Nirvana ceased to be an operational band and became a legal entity – the so-called Nirvana Limited Liability Company. For much of the following decade, Courtney Love – who retained full control over Cobain's publishing – and Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl would vie for mastery of Nirvana's music and Cobain's image. In 2002, after arguments over a planned box set, Novoselic and Grohl requested a court that Love undergo psychiatric evaluation (their request



was refused). In 2011, Love was quoted as saying her late husband's memory had been "raped" after "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was used in the *Muppets* movie. But in 2010, Frances Bean Cobain turned 18, taking control of her trust fund, which represents more than a third of the Cobain estate, and that same year Love reportedly relinquished rights to Cobain's name and likeness in exchange for a \$2.75 million loan from the trust. Since then, things have settled down. Love even joined Novoselic and Grohl as Nirvana were inducted into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall Of Fame in April 2014.



Following Cobain's death, Fair read his *Journals* and discovered that Half Japanese's 1990 album *We Are They Who Ache With Amorous Love* made it into his Top 50 albums. "I knew he was a big fan of Half Japanese, but I didn't know that particular album was one of his favourites. He told me he wanted to start a record label, and that he wanted to sign Half Japanese to his label."

WITH THE CONTENTS of *The Home Recordings* in mind, it's hard not to fantasise about what might have come had Kurt's muse been unleashed, without a major label's bottom line to serve. Still, Brett Morgen's trawl through the Cobain archives proved that the latter would not be easily typecast. "I found this mix tape, which started with Kim Wilde's 'Kids In America'. It had some INXS on it. It was some new wavey type thing. I went to Kim, like, 'Is this your tape? Whose tape is this?' And she was like, 'It's Kurt's!' People don't realise, Kurt was into all types of music. Kurt has been very vocal about his dislike for the Grateful Dead, but one tape I came across, he was painting or doing some art, and in the background he was listening to a Grateful Dead concert on the radio. This album, I think, gives a lot of credence to this idea of how broad his musical influences were."

Once Morgen had decided to compile an album from Cobain's tapes, he was confronted with a new problem: how to present it. As the director sorted through the audio, a



With Courtney Love and daughter Frances, September '93. Inset left: (l-r) Novoselic, Grohl, Cobain's sister, Kim, and mother, Wendy O'Connor, with Love at the Rock'n'Roll Hall Of Fame, April 2014

The Home Recordings confounds any perception of Cobain as a misery guts

it's upbeat and optimistic... it makes me happy to know he had those moments of happiness and contentment," says Morgen. "The joy, the humour and the gentleness there – they were coming through him. They emanate from his voice, the texture and the cadence and how he's talking between the songs. I get a real smile on my face listening to the first half of it. Because so much of what the public was exposed to was angst, and annoyance at being photographed and interviewed... it made me feel good and I think that sentiment will be shared by a lot of Kurt's fans." ●

narrative began to present itself. "It tells a story, it's a journey," says Morgen. "It's not simply a rehash of the film, but a continuum of several of the themes that the film explores. And it does so in a non-filmic way – in a manner that is specific to a listening experience."

The Home Recordings certainly confounds any perception of Cobain as a misery guts. For the most part, its tone is playful and mischievous. "When

AND THE REST

MILK IT!

Nirvana: the posthumous releases...



MTV UNPLUGGED IN NEW YORK

DGC, 1994

MTV played *Unplugged* on a loop following

Cobain's death, and the covers-packed set was released as a live album in November 1994, including several songs played with guests The Meat Puppets, plus fine versions of David Bowie's "The Man Who Sold The World" and The Vaselines' "Jesus Wants Me For A Sunbeam".

9/10



FROM THE MUDDY BANKS OF THE WISHKAH

DGC, 2002

Live album featuring Nirvana performances from between the years 1989 and 1994, compiled by Krist Novoselic. The flipside to *Unplugged*, renditions of "Aneurysm", "Negative Creep" and "Tourettes" are tightly performed and in straight-from-the-soundboard quality, capturing the band at their raw, dynamic best.

8/10



NIRVANA

DGC, 2002

Conceived as a single-disc compilation of Nirvana's greatest

moments in the spirit of The Beatles' 1, this self-titled set feels somewhat sanitised, smoothing off the band's rough edges. It does, however, feature "You Know You're Right" – a rather by-numbers song recorded during the band's final studio session, at Robert Lang Studios in Seattle, in January 1994.

7/10



WITH THE LIGHTS OUT

DGC, 2004

Four-disc boxset collecting B-sides, demos, rough rehearsal recordings and live recordings. A mixed bag, but attractively packaged: in heat-sensitive material that changes colour when touched, revealing images of recording session tapes, plus a 60-page booklet containing liner notes by Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth.

6/10



SLIVER: THE BEST OF THE BOX

DGC, 2005

The good bits of *With The Lights Out*, plus a

few more tracks to make the completists reach into their pockets again. A boombox demo of "Come As You Are" and a very early take on "Spank Thru" from Cobain's pre-Nirvana band Fecal Matter are far from essential, however.

5/10



LIVE AT READING

DGC, 2009

Well-circulated as a bootleg, *Live At Reading* – chronicling the band's

1992 performance at the UK's Reading Festival – is presented on a CD/DVD set, with the latter newly mastered and colour-corrected. From the playful opening – Cobain wheeled onstage by *Melody Maker* journalist Everett True – to the closing drum-kit demolition, it's a blast.

9/10



LIVE AT THE PARAMOUNT

DGC, 2011

Released to mark the 20th anniversary of

Nevermind, a DVD and Blu-ray release of this set at Seattle's Paramount Theatre in October 1991, captured to 16mm film. Erratic camerawork and the sound is far from perfect, but a neat time capsule regardless.

6/10



NEVERMIND: 20TH ANNIVERSARY SUPER DELUXE EDITION

DGC, 2011

A five-disc set, retailing for an eye-watering £80, collects a handful of tracks from the pre-Geffen Smart Studios sessions, some largely worthless "Boombox Demos", a couple of BBC session tracks – most notably an excellent, electric "Something In The Way" – and Butch Vig's initial Devonshire mixes of the album.

6/10



IN UTERO: 20TH ANNIVERSARY SUPER DELUXE EDITION

DGC, 2013

Four-disc set, chiefly of interest for the brand new 2013 mix by Steve Albini, the record's original producer, whose version was originally polished up by Scott Litt for release. Also features a long-lost instrumental jam, "Forgotten Tune".

6/10



Inbloom: Cobain aged two and (inset below) as a teenager

● This was Cobain creating unfettered, not yet weighed down by major-label culture. “I came up through the indie punk culture, and there’s a reason why I stayed in that culture, because there was a genuine sense of family,” says Pavitt, who jumped ship from Sub Pop in 1996, shortly after the label went into partnership with Warners. “What we witnessed post-*Nevermind* was a lot of bands going for it – for the major-label deal – and flaming out because they did not have that indie support system.”

But while it’s something of a cliché that success did Nirvana in, *Montage Of Heck: The Movie* points to a more specific key to Cobain’s depression and anxiety – his fatal flaw, if you will. On first viewing, there’s a moment that feels almost jarring in its emphasis. “Kurt hated being humiliated,” says Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic. “He hated it. He *hated* it. If he ever thought he was humiliated, then you’d see the rage come out. So he would be very stubborn about how the art, the work, came out.”

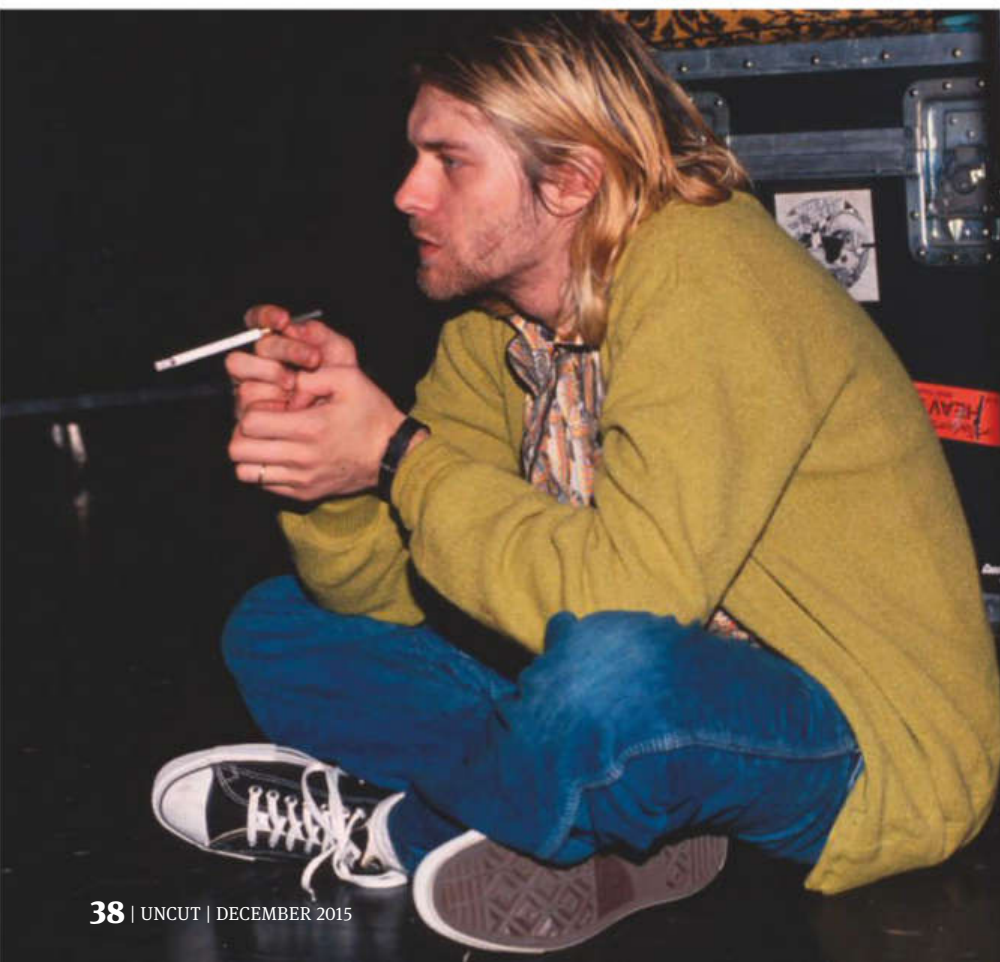
“Going through the archives, I felt that that humiliation, that ridicule, resonated deeply throughout his entire



journey, through all of his art,” says Morgen. “You know that line from [*Bleach* track] ‘Floyd, The Barber’: ‘I was shamed/I was shamed/I was shamed.’” That’s why, he says, the track “Aberdeen” – the monologue in which Kurt is castigated as a “retard fucker”, and goes out to end his life on some train tracks – feels so fundamental. “Having gone through everything, I went back to that story and listened to it more closely,” says Morgen. “And I felt the interesting part of it wasn’t the suicide, but Kurt giving you the reasons why. That is what is relevant. You can hear Kurt tell the story of his adolescent years through an interview with a journalist – Jon Savage, or Michael Azerrad, or what have you – and that’s fine, that’s interesting. But to hear him tell that story as a piece of art – a short fictional story – is even more special. There are fictional elements in it, interwoven with autobiographical elements. What better way for Kurt to explain his experience of his youth than through his creative musings?”

One of the harshest critics of *Montage Of Heck* was Buzz Osborne of the Melvins, a former high-school friend of Cobain, who wrote a piece for *The Talkhouse* describing many of the anecdotes in *Montage Of Heck* as “total bullshit... that’s the one thing no one gets about Cobain – he was a master of jerking your chain.” Stories such as that grotesque sexual experience outlined in “Aberdeen”, claim the Melvins, are “complete bullshit... in that small-town shit-hole, exciting news of that nature would have been common knowledge before the sun set.”

Morgen brushes off Osborne’s criticisms. “When I heard that, I thought: ‘You’re kind of missing the point,’” he says. “None of Kurt’s art should be deconstructed as fact, but history has proven it is full of truths. And they were truths that resonated with people. That particular story, like a lot of Kurt’s art, has autobiographical components but is stuffed up with other elements, in the way that artists do. It’s a rare



Mecca Auditorium, Milwaukee, October 26, 1993



Sketches found in the Cobain archive, as seen in the doc *Montage Of Heck*



“In Kurt’s art, a lot of the messages are as plain as day”

KRIST NOVOSELIC

case of Kurt working in a narrative framework. Most of his work, most of his art, isn’t narratively derived. That to me is its power – it’s a piece of art.”

Krist Novoselic, for one, concurs with Morgen’s interpretation: that Kurt might have expressed himself in abstract and impressionistic ways, but that the emotions and the imagery that drive his creations are 100 per cent for real. “You see his art,” says the bassist in *Montage*

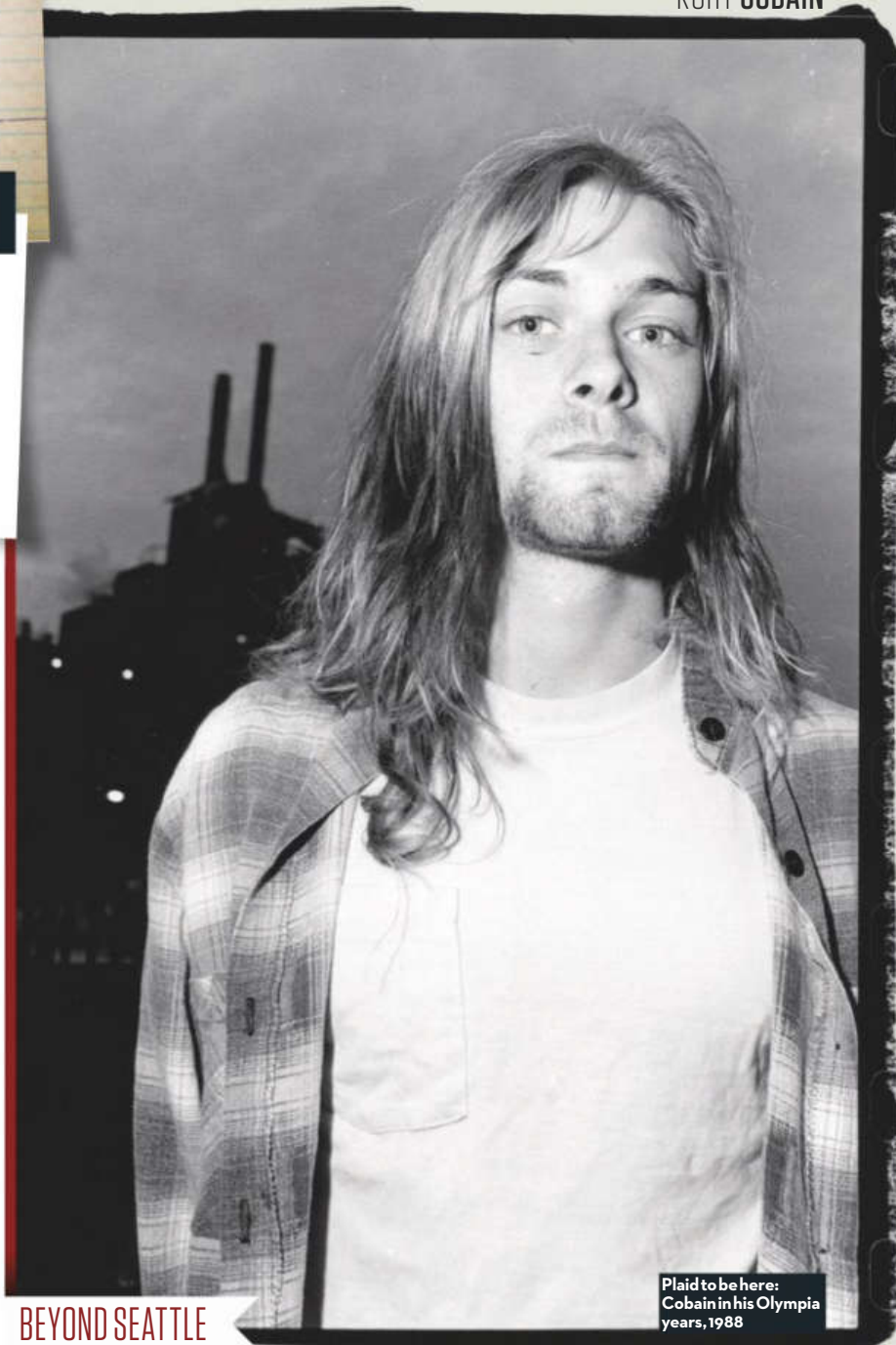
Of Heck. “A lot of those messages are as plain as day.”

So while *Montage Of Heck* can be experimental and playful, it can also be raw and candid. One song towards the end of the album alludes directly to Cobain’s fears of betrayal and rejection. In the film, Courtney Love talks about how she never cheated on Cobain, but thought about it once – and that was the night that Cobain took an overdose of Rohypnol sedative tablets in Rome. It’s hard not to draw a line between this and the lyrical content of “She Only Lies”. Sung by Cobain over spare, plucked guitar, it’s a sort of “Love Will Tear Us Apart” that drips with recrimination. “*She only lies just to save my feelings/I only cry just to make her feel guilty,*” he sings, and the song finishes with the words: “*I really hate her/And I know you will hate her too/If you were given half a chance at all...*” It’s one of the saddest, most wrenching bits of music in an already sad, wrenching catalogue.

“WHAT STARTED OFF a movie ended up becoming the Kurt Cobain project,” says Morgen. “I think the book and the album and the movie all very much complement each other – and work very much within the medium they exist in. The interviews work better as a book than they do as the foundation of a film. The audio album works as a companion to the film, but I believe the album exists as its own listening experience – it is its own journey.”

Perhaps the most surprising thing about *Montage Of Heck* is the sheer extent of Cobain’s creative energies. After eight years studying Cobain’s music, his unguarded thoughts, his unbounded creativity, does Morgen have any further insight into why he chose to document his life in such detail?

“Kurt was an artist, with a capital A,” says Morgen. “He was constantly creating. And the audio bears that out. Listening through his tapes, you get the sense he’s working in a laboratory – you can hear him moving from station to station, so when he was inspired to write he would write; ●



Plaid to be here: Cobain in his Olympia years, 1988

BEYOND SEATTLE

KURT IN OLYMPIA

Cobain spent five years in the Washington State capital – and slammed it in his *Journals*

NIRVANA ARE OFTEN thought of as a Seattle band, but between the years 1986 and 1991, Kurt Cobain lived in Olympia, a port town and the Washington State capital, 60 miles from Seattle. A world away from white-trash Aberdeen, Olympia was a liberal enclave and a college town. “Very radically intellectual,” says Bruce Pavitt. “In large part that was because of Evergreen State College – a very progressive, free-thinking university. Some of the professors were very philosophically feminist – and Kurt was definitely profoundly influenced by some of the

women who were going to Evergreen.”

Cobain was friends with Kathleen Hanna and dated Tobi Vail, who in October 1990 formed the riot grrl group Bikini Kill. But he left Olympia for Los Angeles in 1991, and later decried Olympia as an “indie fascist” scene in his *Journals*. He may have felt snubbed, thinks Pavitt. Cobain wanted to release a Nirvana cassette on K Records, but label head Calvin Johnson wasn’t interested. “I think Calvin was slow on the uptake with Nirvana,” says Pavitt. “I remember specifically in 1991, he threw a gathering called the International Pop Underground, a couple of months before the single ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit’ came out. And he was really musing on how everyone was suddenly into Nirvana – including his niece! Suddenly they were like The Beatles – and this was just before they blew up. That was the sort of commentary going around at the time.”

IAN TILTON

EYEWITNESS!

THE LEAD BELLY TRIBUTE THAT NEVER WAS

Cobain's aborted folk-blues project

ONE OF KURT COBAIN'S favourite artists was Lead Belly. Born in 1888, Huddie Ledbetter balanced his virtuoso skill on the 12-string guitar with a tempestuous personality – he killed a relative in a fight over a woman, and served time on Louisiana's Angola Prison Farm. "It's so raw and sincere," Cobain told Michael Azzerad of Lead Belly's music. "It's something that I hold really sacred to me."

In 1989, he, Novoselic and the Screaming Trees' Mark Pickerel and Mark Lanegan convened in a recording studio as The Jury, a Lead Belly tribute band. The record would stall – "It was as if both Mark and Kurt had too much respect for each other to tell the other what to do," recalled Pickerel. But a version of "Where Did You Sleep Last Night?" with Cobain on guitar is on Lanegan's solo debut, 1990's *The Winding Sheet*. And, of course, Nirvana played it for MTV *Unplugged In New York*. "This guy representing Lead Belly's estate wants to sell me his guitar for \$500,000," said Kurt, introducing the track. "I even asked David Geffen if he'd buy it for me. He wouldn't do it."

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



MTV Live And Loud, Seattle, December '93

when he was inspired to play, he would record. I think for the family, this was where the desire to do this project was born from: to reveal these other aspects of Kurt's artistic pursuits. For me, with the access that I had to Kurt, these were the moments when Kurt seemed to be most content – when he was by himself creating. He wasn't creating to produce a top hit. A lot of this stuff was incredibly personal, and reflective of his state of mind."

So is this the end of the archives – or is there more to come?

"I would estimate you could extract another volume of material, even along the same lines as this one. But there are no plans, and no one has discussed it. Listen, this is pretty robust. The deluxe version is 73 minutes long, and I think that's certainly a lot more than any Kurt fan – or Nirvana fan – ever expected to hear. But yeah, there is more. As I was finishing up the LP, I was searching through the bin for something and I stumbled on a track, like, 'What the hell...?' Just some great track I'd overlooked. And for a bit I was like: 'I'm full for this one, but...'"

It was important that *The Home Recordings* was a collection of solo Cobain, he says – but there's also a good quantity of recordings of full-band rehearsals that might merit further investigation. "I think Krist and Dave's management have access to that stuff for the most part, and the best of that went into *With The Lights Out*, or the various other Nirvana comps. Those decisions are controlled not just by the Cobain estate, but by Dave and Krist. In regards to Kurt's solo endeavours, there's a tremendous amount of spoken-word, film-score stuff left over. But whether anyone puts that stuff together – well, that's up to Courtney and Frances."

After eight years living in Cobain's head, this, says Morgen, is where his involvement ends. "It was never intended to be this anthropological, 360-degree Cobain experience. But I'm thrilled that I was able, to an extent, to liberate the archives. That's sort of how it felt. The creative control I've been given has been nothing short of... shocking. There's been zero filtration from any label, network or studio. No one has ever asked for a change in anything, be it the book, the album or the movie. I never envisaged having this kind of creative free rein. It's bizarre. But the estate and the family, by this stage they knew how invested I was in the material, and trusted I'd be respectful."


Still, Morgen knows *The Home Recordings* will be greeted by cynicism in certain quarters. As with Cobain's *Journals*, published in November 2002, such releases tend to get a mixed reception, criticised as intrusive, self-mythologising, or a cash-in. As Nick Kent wrote in *The Observer* in 2002: "Perhaps the merry widow of grunge has withheld a number of such entries in order to turn Cobain's full correspondence into a multi-volume cash-cow for future plundering."

"I know there's a certain cynicism that if an artist is no

longer alive, nobody should be examining their other elements," says Morgen. "But there are a couple of things to consider. One, with a lot of the material here, Kurt never had a chance to put forward these audio experiments, or these spoken-word pieces. Perhaps at the time there was no medium for this stuff to exist on. Second, the material presented on this LP furthers our understanding of Kurt, the artist. The notion that one should not look at the sketches is dangerous. That's what historians do. We go back and examine Shakespeare's writings outside of his plays – the letters, the correspondence – and it creates a picture."

Morgen agrees with the suggestion that we should view *The Home Recordings* in the

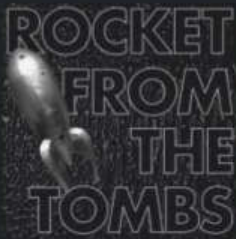
same way as we might view Dylan's *The Basement Tapes* – as an insight into one of rock music's all-time great catalogues, a peek behind the curtain at the inner workings. "It was important to let people know, to label it, that these are home recordings. We didn't want anyone to feel like they were paying money for unfinished work or what have you."

"But in the same way I collect Dylan bootleg recordings – and you can bet I'm going to be the first to get my hands on the new ones coming out, that have *Blonde On Blonde* and *Highway 61* – I find those releases don't take away from the albums themselves. *Blonde On Blonde* will always be *Blonde On Blonde*. *Highway 61* will always be *Highway 61*. But I love hearing the work-ups – how he arrived at those songs. In the same way we look at Leonardo Da Vinci or Michelangelo's sketchbooks. Or we look at the models Picasso made to arrive at *Guernica*. It furthers our understanding and appreciation of Kurt. It's a tribute to his creative prowess." 

Montage Of Heck: *The Home Recordings* is released by Universal on November 13

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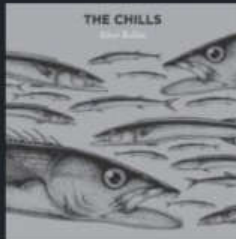


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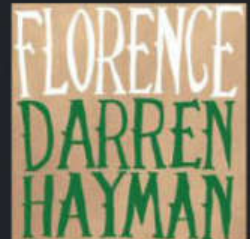


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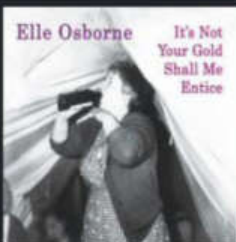


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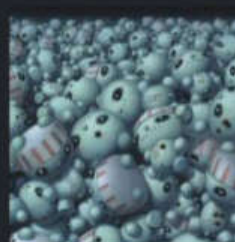


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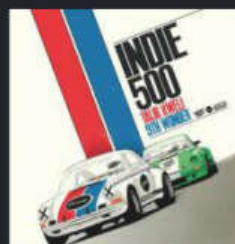


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ALBUM BY ALBUM

Neko Case

The musical journey of an American original, from punk to 'truck driver'

NEKO CASE HAS lived in Vermont for more than six years, but is currently back in her old home of Tucson... to go to the dentist. "That tells you how much I ever go home!" she says, laughing through a thick cold. "But when you find a dentist who makes you not hate going to the dentist, you can't really help but give them a little loyalty."

The unglamorous practicality fits the way Case has always sought to demystify rock'n'roll. As she writes in the foreword to *Truckdriver*, *Gladiator*, *Mule*, the forthcoming box set compiling all of her solo albums and EPs, "Being in a band isn't a race to an awards platform; it is a life, a great and complicated, messy, anxious, hilarious and home-made life." These records trace hers from west to east, from punk to one of Americana's most important modern voices – and as unimportant as such accolades may be, from musical late-starter to Grammy nominee.

Case has "a lot of songs" written for what will become her seventh solo album, but before that, she and the band are busy rehearsing for the *Truckdriver*... tour: "A lot of older songs, dating back to *The Virginian*, that we hadn't really played in a long time."

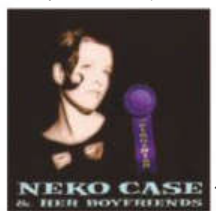
LAURA SNAPES



Chewing over her options, *Middle Cyclone* era, 2009

NEKO CASE & HER BOYFRIENDS THE VIRGINIAN

MINT/BLOODSHOT, 1997



A honky-tonk hello on Case's debut, an album of country swing recorded as she left art school and punk for her journey through Americana.

I had been writing a lot of songs that didn't really go in my punk-rock band, Maow. I wanted to try to make a solo album. I didn't really have anything to lose. It took a long time to put together and it was happening at the same time that I was working with The New Pornographers. I was a ravenous music person and I was in art school at the time. I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it, but it wasn't that defined in my mind then. I was too feral. I was pretty scared, but also super-excited – you can hear it in the singing; I sang on 10 the whole time because I have no idea what my voice does. The title was just a funny joke: at one time in my life I was a Virgo virgin from Virginia. It didn't feel like leaving behind punk – the music scene wasn't any different, it's all the same people. If it's do-it-yourself, it's all the same thing. It's not as if I went to Nashville and made radio music, new country – I was making it up as I went. I didn't really know what I was doing and I never thought anyone would hear that record.

NEKO CASE & HER BOYFRIENDS FURNACE ROOM LULLABY

MINT/BLOODSHOT/LOOSE, 2000



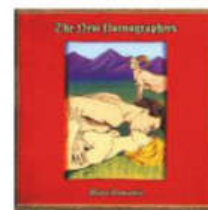
Case strips back *The Virginian's* costumey drama for a weightier follow-up that veers between defiance and grief.

That was a really hard time. I was leaving Canada, finishing school, and really sad because my visa was up and I couldn't live there any more. I moved to Seattle, where there was a really good community of musicians until two million of the greediest people on earth moved to Seattle at once and it was sold off. I lived in one of the last live/work spaces for artists. I felt really good about that record though; it was a lot of fun to make. It was the first time I worked with some of The Sadies. I was lucky enough to go to Toronto and record with Don Kerr, who works with Ron Sexsmith a lot, and record at the old Gas Station studio, which doesn't exist any more. It was an awesome pan-Canadian experience, which broke my heart a little bit more.

Obviously after you've made one record, you learn who you are as a singer a little bit. By then I had toured a lot with The New Pornographers as well. So I got better at trying to find a bit of dynamic rather than singing everything at the top of my lungs. Afterwards I moved to Chicago, where I made a lot of lifelong friends.

THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS MASS ROMANTIC

MINT, 2000



Three years in the making, the Canadian supergroup's debut drew from Bowie, Rundgren and The Beatles, and reframed Case as a swaggering rock singer.

It took three years to make because we were doing it at our own pace, for fun. No-one was in a hurry and all those guys were still in a trillion other bands. I've never written anything on a New Pornographers record. I've come up with my singing parts, but Carl [Newman] and Dan Bejar are the writers in that band, which is a really nice release for me. Not that I was an experienced enough songwriter to have made my own records and then whipped something out for The New Pornographers by that time anyway. Whereas Dan and Carl had been writing in bands for a long time, and what I write probably wouldn't fit in well anyway. But I like being in two projects that are completely different. I was excited to be along for the ride because I admired Dan and Carl's songwriting so much and I've learned so much from them. Playing those songs live was the most fun thing ever. We were all really excited by the way it turned out. We would practise a little bit here and there, but honestly it would be like this magical thing that would be happening in the shadows while I was at school. It was like a witchy cauldron that they pulled stuff out of.



Pornstar:
with The New
Pornographers

NEKO CASE CANADIAN AMP

LADY PILOT, 2001



Originally a tour-only EP, *Canadian Amp* was Case's first foray into home recording, largely a covers project that was her tribute to the Canuck musicians who shaped her.

I didn't have a regular band, so I decided I might as well just put my own name on it. At that point what I had was a rotating cast of awesome musicians who could spare a little time to play here, tour there. And I was leaning heavily on The Sadies, too, who had a lot of their own touring to do. I recorded the EP myself in my kitchen, because I wanted to see if I could do it – I had rented ADAT equipment, and it was so much fun. Our apartment sounded really good and had a really high ceiling. It was a little project of love. Joey Burns from Calexico gave me the idea – “You should just record one yourself and have a tour-only CD.” I thought it was a great idea.

I was living in a rough part of Chicago at the time – a young man got shot right across the street from my house while we were loading our gear to go on tour. It was the saddest, worst day I can remember. I was definitely *terribly* homesick for Canada. This record was my love letter to the country and awesome Canadian songwriters. I have a trillion more I'd like to record of awesome Canadian songwriters, but I'll get to that.

NEKO CASE BLACKLISTED

BLOODSHOT, 2002



Dark and understated, *Blacklisted* began Case's distinction as a true original: her immensely powerful voice illuminated her most personal set of lyrics to date.

This was recorded before *Canadian Amp*. I'd been spending a lot of time in Arizona, recording and hanging out with Howe Gelb and Calexico. Both Howe and Joey are really free, they just go at it – all ideas are good ideas, let's just put them down. It doesn't have to work the first time or the second time, it can just be for the pleasure of doing it. They have a very inclusive way of doing things and I think that really influenced me a lot. If it sounds like a departure, it's because I was learning more about guitar playing. I had only started playing guitar at about 28 years old. And I was getting more excited about playing other instruments – piano, and a little bit of drums on that record.

At the time I was really into soundtracks and figuring out how to use negative space – drones, really, which I'm sure came from knowing Howe. I remember the soundtrack for *Dead Man* by Neil Young – at one point you can hear the engine of a Ford F150 idling in the background and a door slamming. I realised you can use anything to make a bed of sounds to put other sounds on top of. Things like that were very influential. The record actually turned out to be

pretty bare bones, though at the time it felt huge to me. Mary Margaret O'Hara is on the record simply because I was recording at the Gas Station and she was kind enough to come in. I've been a fan of hers forever; she's one of my favourite songwriters and singers.

THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS ELECTRIC VERSION

MINT/MATADOR, 2003



The clue's in the title: The New Pornographers took off in a way that nobody expected, making their second album a more professional job than their shambling debut.

I hardly remember making that record at all. I know that a lot of vocals were recorded at John Collins' parents' house, and I was touring a lot at the time... Folks would drift in and out but I was on a pretty tight schedule, so I came in and did my parts – it was like little islands that were floating near each other, but not touching. I didn't know that this is the Pornographers record where I have the most vocal turns – maybe Carl just decided he needed as much female vocals on the record as male vocals and I was the only female in the band at that time, so they cracked the whip! It's such an easy dynamic to come back to – my personal band and The New Pornographers have existed for the exact same amount of time, so I don't really know one without the other.



Case today: "I live like a long-haul trucker"

NEKO CASE FOX CONFESSOR BRINGS THE FLOOD

ANTI-, 2006



Featuring the likes of Howe Gelb, Calexico and The Sadies, Fox Confessor... saw Case distinguishing her lyrical character. On standout "Hold On, Hold On", she runs from a wedding and conventional incarnations of love, "with a Valium from the bride".

I had moved to Arizona; I recorded there a lot and found it very relaxing. I wanted to buy my own house, because I'd saved up a little money and was terrified that if I didn't do something with this tiny nest egg, it was going to disappear. I'd never had anything before, so I was scared shitless. Tucson was affordable and that was just the writing on the wall. I produced the record – I'd been around it for a long time and all I did was play music and work on music, so it became a necessity. I was overjoyed by the pleasure of the sounds changing, and knowing that you could make these changes. I have to give [co-producer] Darryl Neudorf a lot of credit. He would teach you how to do something while he's doing it with you.

That was the first record where there was a bit of a cohesive theme. I was obsessed with fairy tales from Eastern Europe. I loved the way they were cautionary and funny, but they weren't morality tales. They were based on common sense but were also twisted and hilarious, and they gave children credit to handle facts without Disneyfying them. I wrote "Hold On, Hold On" with The Sadies while we were making *The Tigers Have Spoken* and it wasn't quite ready to be performed live. I still think it might be one of the better songs I've written. It's not so much about being a lone wolf as it is, "I don't want *that* like *that*." But it doesn't go on to tell you how you need it. And then *Middle Cyclone* is like, "Dude, I need it. I don't know exactly how I need it still, but now I just need it."

NEKO CASE MIDDLE CYCLONE

ANTI-, 2009



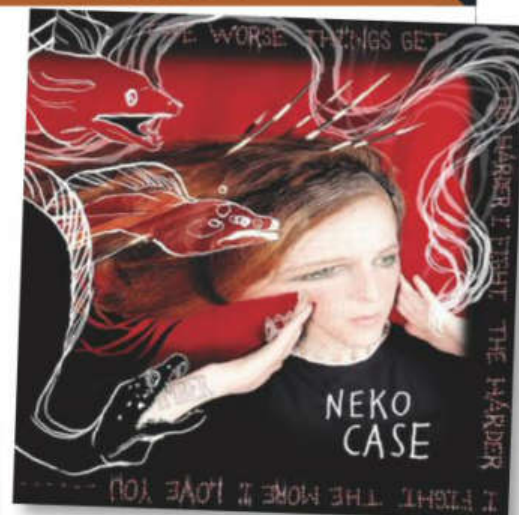
Case's fieriest record to date: she brandishes a sword on its cover, and brings the same piercing quality to lyrics about humankind's animal essentialness.

I had moved to Vermont but I recorded that thing all over the place: Brooklyn, Toronto, Vancouver, lots in Tucson. My best friend, Nate, and I bought as many free pianos as we could to put in my barn to record, like an art project. It ended up costing us a lot, because there's no such thing as a free piano. They're probably featured on about three different songs.

And that was the first time that the rest of The New Pornographers got to really play on the record, which I was really excited about. During the recording of *Middle Cyclone* I was reading a lot of things like Angela Carter, and Annie Dillard. I read Dillard's *The Living*, which really kicked the shit out of me in a great way because it was so much about where I came from, in Washington State, and nobody had ever really written a book about that time that I'd read.

These incredibly smart people writing with humour have the most beautiful way with sentences and making things sound singsongy and lyrical as you read them – it kind of makes the painful parts more painful, in a way, like songs. And I love that Annie Dillard wasn't a woman or a man, writing this book. She was consciousness in the ether, writing a book. I like that balance – messy human-animal, animal-human. I was interested in the theme of animals rebelling against their prisons – there's only so much mental torture you can take before they become saturated and snap. Humans are so dumb, we're like, "Why have they forgotten their manners?" They never had manners! They're wild animals. I feel so terrible when there are large predators in captivity.

THE UNCUT CLASSIC



NEKO CASE THE WORSE THINGS GET, THE HARDER I FIGHT, THE HARDER I FIGHT, THE MORE I LOVE YOU

ANTI-, 2013

Mired in the "gulaggy boringness" of depression induced by the deaths of her estranged parents and beloved grandmother, Case rallied for her sixth record, an unflinching confrontation of motherhood and survival.

That record was good on one hand, but unfortunate on the other. I was dealing with depression and grief after the deaths of my parents, who I was not close to, and my grandmother, who I was. And I had kind of run away from that. I kept touring and thinking that I was fine with it, but really I wasn't. When my grandmother died, there were no questions between us, whereas when my parents died there was so much yuckiness. I didn't really know how to deal with it. I worked on that record *despite* being depressed rather than *because* I was depressed. I'm glad I did it but, at the same time, it wasn't a super-pleasurable experience.

I hadn't really written about myself before. I thought, nobody wants to hear that. My family did not talk about themselves. I remember when I was a kid, trying to fix a bandana in the mirror too much, and my mom said, "Don't become vain." And it sticks. I made three records before my grandma told me she had been in a harmony-singing band with her brother! I was like, "Why would you not tell me this?" "I don't know, it just never came up." She was hilarious.

But it wasn't difficult to write about myself. I write in my journal all the time: a mixture of thoughts, observations and song lyrics. They're all mushed together. I just don't think it's so interesting that everybody would want to hear about it. I basically live like a long-haul trucker most of the time. Which I find interesting but... I wish people were more receptive to how unglamorous rock'n' roll is, so that weirdness would go away and it would seem more accessible to people. It wasn't a difficult record to tour at all, because of the interplay between myself and my bandmates. The common goal to make something for the audience was a nice thing to do that made me feel a lot more useful. 📍

Truckdriver, Gladiator, Mule is released on November 13 through Anti-Records

AUDIO SOCIAL DISSENT



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California Dreaming

Strobe lights. Loud music. LSD. It is 50 years since the first “acid tests” in San Francisco, the playful socio-chemical experiments which laid the groundwork for a psychedelic counterculture, and for stranger, more interesting times. Before them, “there was no magic or creativity,” explains Merry Prankster Hugh Romney. “Acid blew all that karmic cement apart...”

Story: Rob Hughes

Photograph: Ted Streshinsky

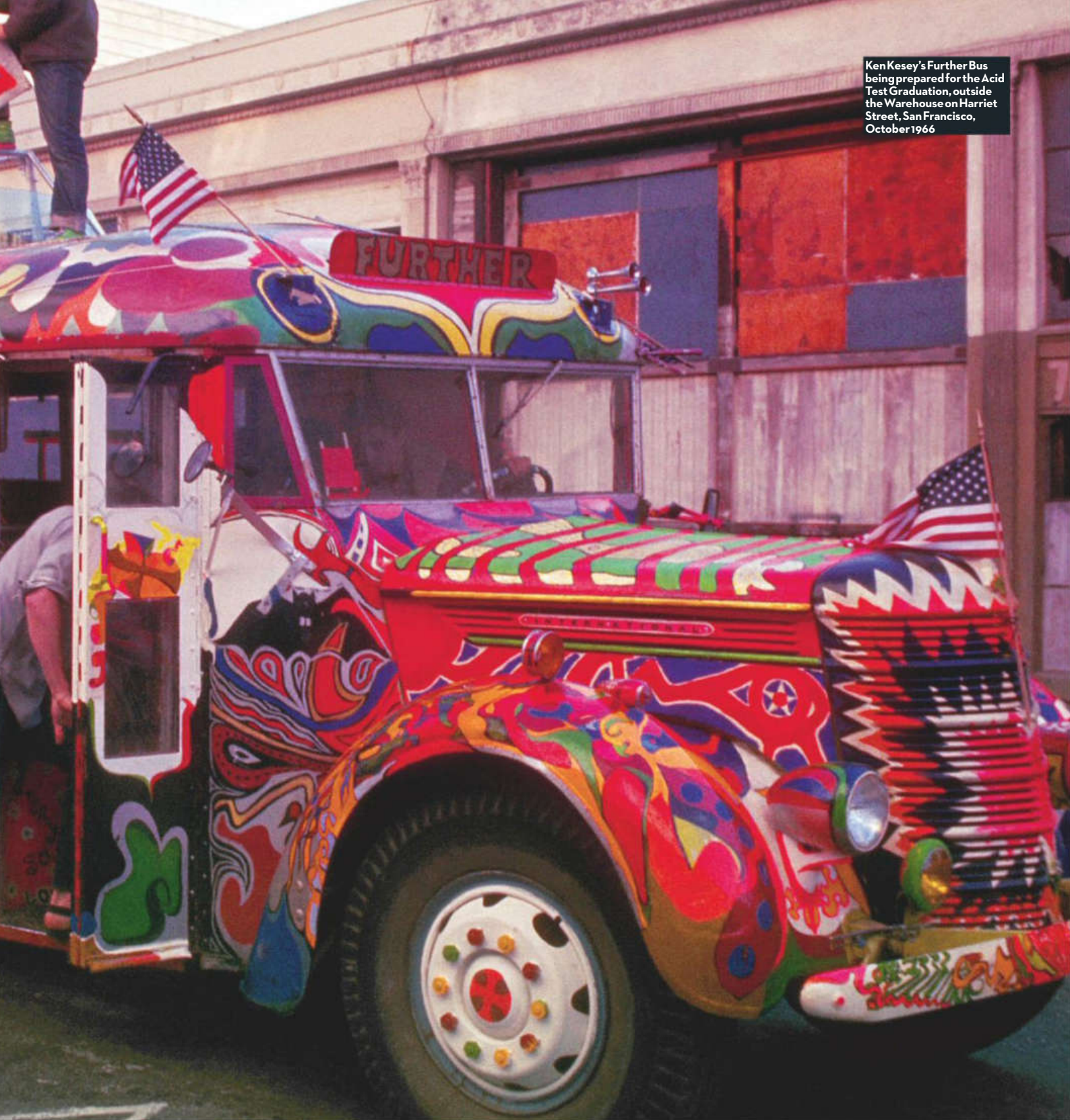


THE LONGSHOREMEN'S HALL near San Francisco's waterfront looks fairly ordinary from the outside. A compact building with a chunky roof, primarily built to load and unload shipping cargo, it's the kind of space that favours function over form. Appearances, however, can often be deceptive. Anyone peeking in one Saturday evening in January 1966, for instance, would have discovered an extraordinary spectacle. Billed as “an orgy of colour and sound” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the three-day Trips

Festival is at its height. Aside from live music by The Grateful Dead and Big Brother & The Holding Company, there are pulsing strobes, giant lightboxes, film projections, poetry, dancing and “electric thunder sculptures”. Attendees have been invited to wear “ecstatic dress”. Thousands have poured through the doors from across the Bay Area, intrigued by the promise of an LSD experience without the LSD. This, it transpires, is nonsense. There's acid for anyone who wants it, disguised within huge tubs of ice cream. “Maybe this is the rock revolution,” says the festival flyer.

The event, spanning January 21-23, has been organised by The Merry Pranksters. A kinetic

Ken Kesey's Further Bus being prepared for the Acid Test Graduation, outside the Warehouse on Harriet Street, San Francisco, October 1966



bunch of Day-Glo bohemians, formed around the totemic figure of Ken Kesey, their mission is to explore life outside of societal norms. And, it seems, to turn on the wider populace to the mind-expanding properties of psychedelic drugs. Official figures vary, but it's estimated that over 6,000 people turned up that weekend.

"That seemed like a huge number," recalls Prankster Ed McClanahan. "The word 'hippy' didn't really have any currency at that time, until everybody suddenly saw everybody else and went: 'Oh! There's another one!' Who knew there were 6,000 people who were all like that?"

The Trips Festival was just the latest in a string of public happenings, billed as "Acid Tests" (LSD

was still legal), undertaken by Kesey and the Pranksters. But it was by far the biggest and most successful. The consensus, too, was that it represented some kind of breakthrough moment. Tom Wolfe chronicled the Pranksters' exploits in 1968's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. In it, he pinpointed the Trips Festival as the start of the whole Haight-Ashbury era. "It was already happening in pockets at the Acid Tests," offers Denise Kaufman, known in Prankster circles as Mary Microgram. "But the Trips Festival was the convergence of it all. There was this desire for all of us to come together. The Dead played with what was going on in the room; it wasn't like everything was pre-set. Break down the barriers

and distinctions, take the proscenium away, and nobody is the audience. We're all participants."

For Hugh Romney, a colourful Prankster who was later christened 'Wavy Gravy' by BB King, LSD was integral to this communal shift in perception. "Everybody in America was still walking round in this Eisenhower mentality of khaki pants, white buck shoes, button-down collars and button-down brains," he recalls. "There was no magic or creativity. What the acid did was go in there and blow all that karmic cement apart. People could see rainbows and colours and consciousness began to rise. It's beyond language once you break through to the other side. It's a highway to God."



Too much, magic bus: Ken Kesey and fellow Pranksters, San Francisco, April 1967

“YOU’RE EITHER ON THE BUS OR OFF THE BUS”: UNCUT’S PANEL OF MERRY PRANKSTERS

KEN BABBS (AKA ‘INTREPID TRAVELLER’):

A helicopter pilot in Vietnam prior to rejoining his ex-student friend Ken Kesey in the Pranksters, Ken Babbs was on the original 1964 bus trip from La Honda to New York. He was an integral part of the Acid Test experience, rigging up distortion-free sound systems at high volume. His website (skypilotclub.com) serves as a repository for many of the Pranksters’ experiences.

CAROLYN GARCIA (‘MOUNTAIN GIRL’):

Introduced to Kesey by Neal Cassady in 1964, New Yorker Carolyn Adams was one of the more voluble members of the group. She and Kesey were an item for a time (producing a daughter, Sunshine, in 1966), before she wed fellow Prankster George Walker. The union was short-lived, however, and Adams took up with Jerry Garcia, whom she married in 1981.

ED McCLANAHAN (‘CAPTAIN KENTUCKY’):

Kentucky native Ed McClanahan was a lecturer at Stanford University when he first met Kesey in the early ‘60s. Among his novels and collections of essays are *The Natural Man*, *Spit In The Ocean #7: All About Ken Kesey and Famous People I Have Known*, which recounts his adventures as a Prankster.

DENISE KAUFMAN (‘MARY MICROGRAM’):

During the late ‘60s, all-girl group The Ace Of Cups shared stages with

Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead and Jimi Hendrix. Singer/guitarist Denise Kaufman, who met Kesey after taking part in 1964’s Free Speech Movement rally at Berkeley, remained with the band until the early ‘70s. She now teaches yoga.

LEE QUARNSTROM:

Ex-Beatnik and journalist Lee Quarnstrom travelled extensively across the US before becoming Kesey’s neighbour in La Honda, California. Married Space Daisy in 1967 at the Fillmore. In the ‘70s he became Executive Editor of *Hustler*, a period chronicled in his 2014 memoir, *When I Was A Dynamiter*.

WAVY GRAVY:

As Hugh Romney, Wavy Gravy (inset below right) started out in the early ‘60s as poetry director of the Gaslight Cafe in NY, where he shared a room with Bob Dylan. Lenny Bruce became his manager when he started touring his surreal poetry and monologues. As occasional MC at Woodstock, he famously announced: “What we have in mind is breakfast in bed for 400,000!” A film of his life, *Saint Misbehavin’: The Wavy Gravy Movie*, landed in 2010.

TOM WOLFE ALWAYS maintained that, in America at least, the ‘60s started when The Beatles arrived in New York for *The Ed Sullivan Show*. But it can be argued that another event, a journey that Kesey and his companions underwent four months later, in June 1964, was equally pivotal.

Kesey had an impressive back story. A former champion wrestler and football star at the University Of Oregon, he’d graduated from its School Of Journalism in 1957. Moving to California, he signed up to Stanford University’s creative-writing programme, where his social group included other authors like McClanahan, Larry McMurtry and Robert Stone.

In 1959, he took part in a CIA-funded experiment at Menlo Park Veterans Hospital. Kesey was among a number of volunteers who were given various psychoactive drugs (LSD, psilocybin, mescaline and amphetamine IT-290) over a period of several weeks, as part of covert government research. A short while afterwards, he wrote *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* while working as a psychiatric aide on the night shift at Menlo Park. The novel’s central theme – the individual’s right to basic freedoms in the face of the all-controlling system – became a personal crusade in his life. “Ken had grace, style, brains,” says Ken Babbs, Prankster and best friend from Stanford. “He was a magician, full of outlandish adventures and yarns. The word ‘showman’ is very close to ‘shaman.’” Wavy Gravy calls him “a gigantic figure. Kesey was like Flash Gordon to Timothy Leary’s Merlin.”

Kesey used the profits from *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* to buy a log house in La Honda, nestled in the Santa Cruz mountains, which became a base for his family and assorted Pranksters. The remainder was funnelled into a 1939 International Harvester school bus, which they swiftly customised into a travelling work of art: speakers on top, microphones inside and a hatch to allow people to ride on the roof. Its gaudy psychedelic paintwork included a preferred destination, ‘Further’ (or ‘Furthur’).

The Pranksters’ plan in June ‘64 was a cross-country road trip, ostensibly to celebrate the publication of Kesey’s *Sometimes A Great Notion* and to visit the New York World’s Fair. The real aim, however, was to see what response they

would provoke as they crossed the country. Their business included improvised music, LSD experiments, tape loops and broadcasts. The adventure was recorded on 16mm film, with the intention of making a

Pranksters movie. Meanwhile, the bus rolled into towns throughout the States, offering to turn people on to acid. Certain phrases became enigmatic tenets of the Prankster ideal: “You’re either on the bus or off the bus”, “Nothing lasts”; “Never trust a Prankster”. Fourteen people left from La Honda, including their designated driver, Neal Cassady.



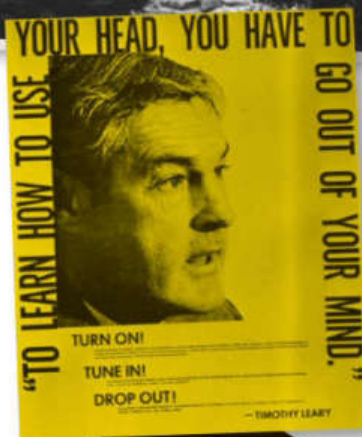
Cassady was the Pranksters' link to the Beat Generation before them. He had been immortalised as Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's *On The Road* and as Hart Kennedy in John Clellon Holmes' *Go*. "Neal Cassady was the fastest man alive," asserts Wavy Gravy, who often rode shotgun over the following year. "He would not just be driving the bus, but possibly rolling a joint, peeling an orange and having a conversation with some guy out of the window while talking to me. All at once. He had an amazing amount of knowledge that he was able to scoop up and toss to the four directions."

In New York, Cassady introduced the rest of the Pranksters to Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Kerouac, who seemed resigned to drinking his days away, was unmoved. Ginsberg was the opposite, embracing the Pranksters' sense of truth-seeking chaos and arranging for them to meet their pioneering counterparts on the East Coast, Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert. The encounter was a let-down. Leary wasn't at home when the bus arrived at Millbrook, a vast gothic mansion that served as headquarters of the League For Spiritual Discovery. Instead, Alpert was the lone welcoming party. Leary eventually showed up, talked to his visitors for a few minutes, then retired to his room. "They'd come out of a research and academic background," explains Kaufman, "and I think there was a certain pomposity about it all. My sense of it was that Leary was more used to being the authority figure, which Kesey really wasn't. There was more of a communal sense to the Pranksters; it was just much more untamed."

POST-TRIP, KESEY SETTLED back in La Honda. Though he quickly discovered that friends and acquaintances from all over California wanted to drop in and watch the footage the Pranksters had shot. There was a significant amount of it – more than 100 hours of film – and Kesey found that these home screenings were rapidly turning into events. "We were editing our bus movie at Kesey's place," says Babbs, "and every Saturday night we would show the reel that we edited



Timothy Leary's house, Millbrook, 1966



"KESEY WAS FLASH GORDON TO TIMOTHY LEARY'S MERLIN"
WAVY GRAVY

that week. Word got out and soon the crowd was getting too big for the place to handle. So we rented halls and came up with the name, The Acid Test. And here's the theme: 'Can You Pass The Acid Test?' A double meaning was how you determined if rock was really gold. You put acid on it and if it shone, it was gold. Those who didn't shine weren't high."

The first Acid Test, in November 1965, was something of an ad hoc affair. Held at Babbs' place near Santa Cruz, its sole promotional tool was a cardboard sign in a local bookstore. Allen Ginsberg showed up, along with the Pranksters (including Cassady) and a small gaggle of local bohos. "The Merry Band of Pranksters was actually a real band," Babbs recalls, "though we played instruments in a bizarre fashion. We called our music a form of non-verbal communication. We had the instruments set up in the living room, then went outside to commune with the moon and form an OM Circle [a type of 'Orgasmic Meditation']. We heard music coming from the house, went in and saw

that The Warlocks were playing our instruments."

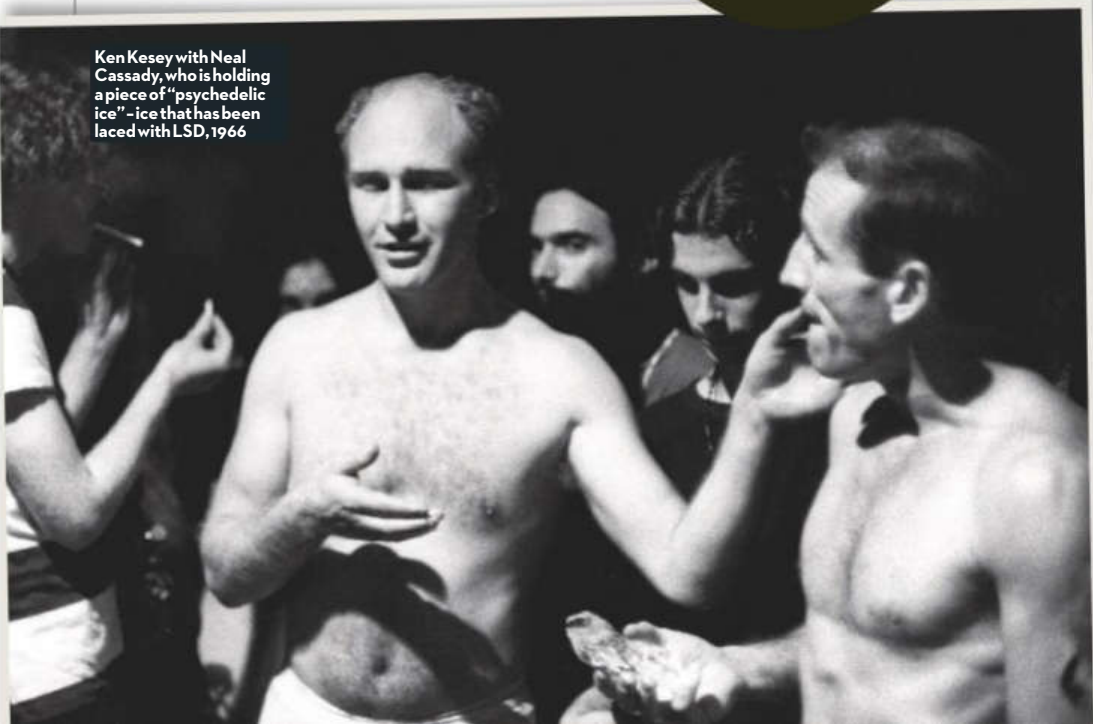
The Warlocks – soon to rename themselves the Grateful Dead – were central to the Acid Test experience, as was LSD, provided by Kesey's friend Owsley Stanley, known to all as 'the LSD cook'. As the Dead became the regular house band at the Tests, their relationship with Stanley flourished. Not only did he bring the chemicals, he also became their trusted soundman.

The first major Acid Test came on December 11, 1965. Muir Beach was the setting, just north of San Francisco. The Pranksters commissioned some psychedelic poster art to promote the show, which listed the Grateful Dead, The Fugs and Allen Ginsberg among the "Happeners", alongside "Roy's Audio-Optics" and "huge, rumbly movies". Several hundred people turned up for the event, which also saw the Pranksters introduce strobe lights. In many ways, Muir Beach signalled the start of multi-media entertainment. "Like all Prankster endeavours the Acid Tests were uniquely ours," offers Babbs. "We fell in the crack between the Beat Generation and the Psychedelic Revolution and had our own originality and individuality."

Kesey's own view on what constituted an Acid Test was pretty nebulous. For him, there were no specific goals other than "just discovering what there was out there". As he explained to *The Paris Review* in 1994, six years before his death, he was more interested in questions than solutions. "The job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery, plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom," he said. "The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer." He and the Pranksters were merely "divine losers" operating outside of straight society. And having a ball in the process.

"Lively fun and humour is sometimes a lot more valuable for making people feel comfortable and drawing more people in," asserts Carolyn Garcia, better known in Prankster lore as Mountain Girl (and, later, as wife of Jerry Garcia). "We saw psychedelics as tools that creative people needed to have. I know they had events

Ken Kesey with Neal Cassady, who is holding a piece of "psychedelic ice" – ice that has been laced with LSD, 1966



JERRY WHO?

MEET
CAPTAIN
TRIPS

THE GRATEFUL DEAD were still billed as The Warlocks when they played an Acid Test at the Big Beat club in Palo Alto on December 18, 1965. Not only did Owsley Stanley introduce the band to manager Rock Scully that night, it's also where Jerry Garcia acquired his 'Captain Trips' nickname. "The band was on a break and Jerry and I were in the parking lot," recalls Denise Kaufman. "A police officer drove up, parked his car and walked towards us. He was a little aggressive, but there was something about Jerry that was so good-humoured and peaceful that the guy just had nowhere to go with that energy. They had a short conversation, then the cop turned around and walked away. As he did that, Jerry lifted up the brim of his hat and went: 'Trips, Cap'n!' It was like watching somebody do a magic trick. I told Ken Kesey what had happened and Jerry instantly became 'Captain Trips'."

in Timothy Leary's group, but it was very intellectualised and I don't think they had much fun. That said, you've got to have a fairly strong mental constitution to enjoy the ride when taking psychedelics. You have to be sure that you're physically and mentally strong enough to avoid the swamps of the mind. My first trip took place out in the forest at Ken's place, wandering through gigantic trees. All these branches on the forest floor kept re-arranging themselves into amazing and intricate patterns: mosaic floors and ancient designs. I also had auditory hallucinations, whereby I could hear Tibetan monks chanting in the caves of Tibet, even though I was high on LSD in California. All the hairs stood up on my head. I realised there were these strong currents of human activity running through the planet that you can tune in to."

For Ed McClanahan, the true definition of psychedelia is "an extended ecstatic moment. There's just a sense of enormous well-being. It's like 1,000 watts higher than the feeling you get on Christmas morning as a kid. I'm not a religious person at all, but it's a premonition of what heaven could be."

TRUE TO THE Pranksters' pioneering spirit, there was only one place to go: higher. The Trips Festival was to be the culmination of their endeavours thus far. There was a problem though. Kesey had been charged with marijuana possession two days earlier, his second bust in a year. He and Mountain Girl had been sitting on the roof of Prankster Stewart Brand's house, talking about the festival and smoking grass, when a neighbour called the police. Kesey was released on bail, with the proviso that he wasn't allowed to associate with the Pranksters any more. It was too late for all that. He and the Pranksters, particularly Brand and Bay Area artist Ramon Sender, had invested too much time organising and promoting the event, cranking the 'Further' bus around San Francisco to spread the word. Kesey defied the authorities by dressing up in a spacesuit and hiding out on a balcony at the Trips Festival, armed with a microphone and projector.

Babbs was directly beneath him in the centre of the hall, directing operations from an enormous scaffolding tower, stuffed with electronic paraphernalia. The police were in force too, sent by their department bosses to monitor an event that had been carefully advertised as a "non-drug re-creation of a psychedelic experience".

The guests at the Longshoremen's Hall were dancing wildly under strobe and ultraviolet lights, tripping on acid. The room itself was a full of streamers and balloons, with films, sound machines, the Dead and a running commentary echoing through the speakers, courtesy of Babbs, Mountain Girl, Cassidy, Wavy Gravy and Kesey. "The three floors of the building were all open to each other," recalls Carolyn Garcia, "so Ken was writing funny lines of prose on this overhead projector and putting them onto the ceiling in huge, 4ft letters. They were little twisted statements about religion and politics and philosophy, all rolled into one. Things like: 'Is God a doughnut?' It was a case of trying to keep people entertained by having a continuous stream of event-going: talking, singing, music-playing and so on. Dancing stuck out as something that people immediately needed to do, because of the heightened physical energy that one gets in a psychedelic state."

"We had no motives other than making a movie, doing music, elevating the spirit and sharing our experience with others," adds Babbs. "This was what the Trips Festival was about, a place for all the people in the Bay Area, those who were exploring new ways of expressing themselves, to come together and strut their stuff. Freak freely, as the expression went."

It's also important not to underestimate the

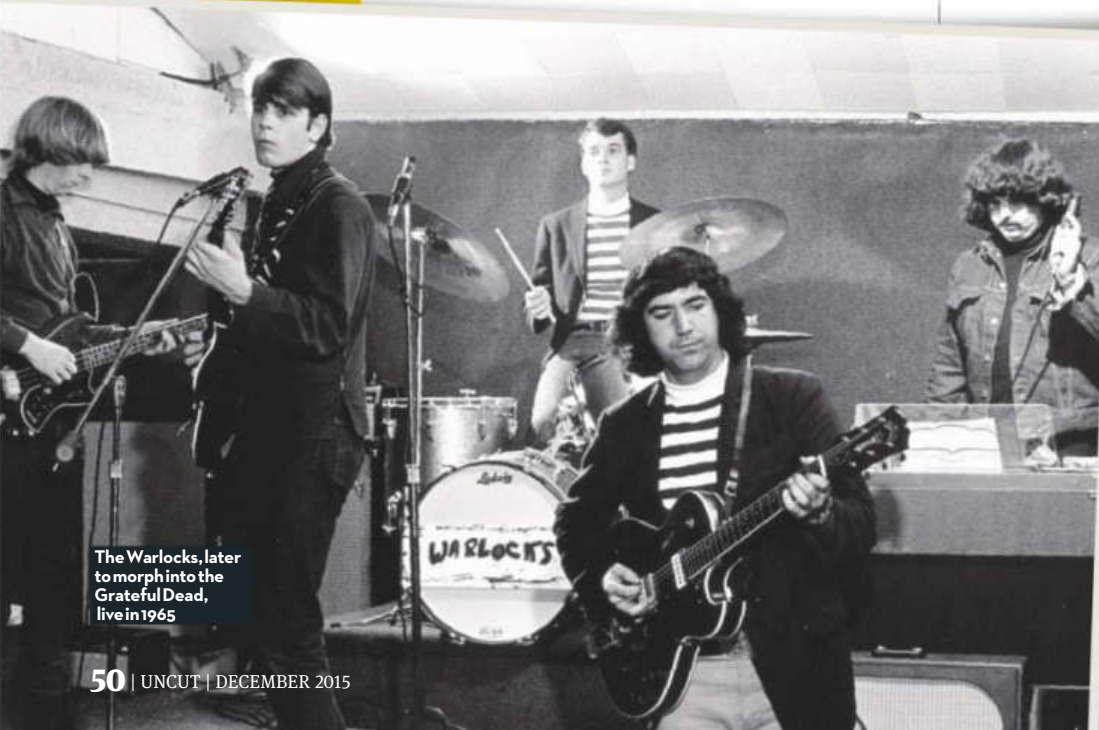
Grateful Dead's role in the Tests. The surviving Pranksters stress that they didn't merely provide background music. "They created the Acid Tests to as much of an extent as Ken did," insists McClanahan. "But they were of it, too, if that makes sense. Jerry Garcia's mind was cracked open. He just picked things up and retained things. He and Kesey were very much alike in that sense. They both had a very high level of intelligence and intuition."

Prankster Lee Quarnstrom remembers that the Dead "were on the same runaway train as we were. They had no idea whether it was going to crash or break into a new space any more than we did. The Grateful Dead weren't interested in getting rich. They didn't seem to have the 'I'm-a-rock-star' egos that drove a lot of musicians."

Nevertheless, getting rich was a natural consequence of The Trips Festival. Co-ordinator and promoter Bill Graham was pleasantly surprised that the weekend grossed more than \$12,000, with almost no overheads. What's more, there was generous coverage of the event in *Newsweek*, *Time* and *Life*. Within weeks, Graham was hosting regular happenings of his own at the Fillmore, with bands such as Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Big Brother & The Holding Company augmented by



**"THE
TRIPS
FESTIVAL
WAS A
PLACE TO
FREAK
FREELY"**
KEN BABBS



The Warlocks, later to morph into the Grateful Dead, live in 1965



Kesey speaking at the Acid Test Graduation, October 31, 1966

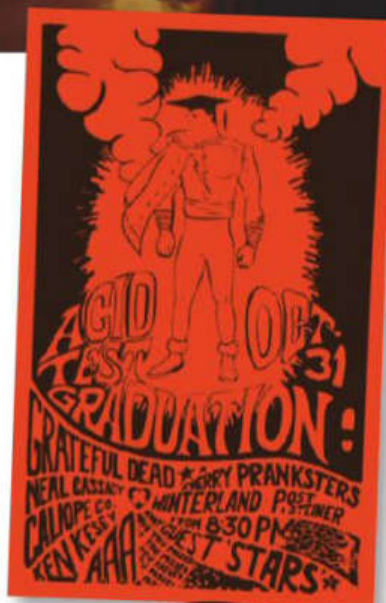
psychedelic light shows and projections. "It's where Bill Graham figured, 'By God, there's money in rock'n'roll!'" recalls Wavy Gravy.

WITH KESEY NOW a fugitive, Babbs took over and organised a series of Acid Tests in Los Angeles. None of them quite captured the same sensory thrills as the Trips Festival, with perhaps the exception of the Watts Test of February '66, held less than six months after the Watts Riots with the Pranksters now feeling "the hot breath of security on us".

"It was the eve of when LSD became illegal, just after the riots, with the buildings still smouldering," continues Wavy Gravy. "Huge amounts of people came pouring in. We had these two galvanised trashcans and I got on the microphone: 'OK everybody, pay really close attention. The Kool-Aid on the right is for the kids, the Kool-Aid on the left is the electric Kool-Aid.' I went over it about 15 times, but sooner or later the whole place started melting down. Owsley had set up this magnificent sound system and Paul Foster, another Prankster, had painted his face blue on the right side and silver on the left."

"It was mostly neighbourhood people who came, and most of them had never taken LSD before," Quarnstrom recalls. "It was a good mix of wacko crazy white people and interested local South LA residents. Everybody was dosed, really high. And the people of South LA seemed just as happy and goofy as we and the Grateful Dead were."

The last Californian event came at the end of October '66, when a special 'Acid Test Graduation' was held at Winterland in San Francisco. And although there was to be one more – organised by Kesey's old friend Larry McMurtry in Houston the following spring – the happenings were effectively over. "We quit doing the Acid Tests the night LSD became illegal," says Babbs, "and drove the bus to Mexico to hook up with Kesey, who was still on the run." The core Pranksters stayed there for six months.



"WE FOUND THERE WERE WAYS TO AWAKEN OUR HUMANITY"

DENISE KAUFMAN

IT'S POSSIBLE TO trace the legacy of the Pranksters through certain key aspects of Western pop culture. The Acid Test format – mixed-media shows with music, film and trippy visuals – was appropriated at Bill Graham's two Fillmore venues, in San Francisco and New York, in the late '60s. From there it fanned outwards. There were even echoes of the Tests in the emergence of the late '80s British rave scene.

Above all, perhaps, it offered a tantalising glimpse into the possibility of a more tolerant, harmonious future. Says Quarnstrom: "I think that everybody in the LSD scene in the Bay Area thought: 'Man, if everybody did this, what a wonderful world it'd be. We could all have peace and brotherhood and we could end war and racism and so on.' But it became clear that there's the same percentage of assholes who take LSD as there is in the normal population. So Richard Nixon wasn't going to paint his face, smoke pot and start wearing psychedelic clothes."

Denise Kaufman maintains that the Acid Tests "were a bowl for people to hopefully safely explore a sense of interconnectivity. It wasn't an individual acid trip in that way; it was a much larger endeavour. We found there were ways to awaken our humanity and move things forward. I think that's something that came out of the Pranksters and reached into the culture in so many ways. There was a real exploration of consciousness going on. It wasn't, 'Let's get high and party!' There's a lot of superficial reviewing of those years without an understanding of the era."

For Ken Babbs, the Pranksters merely rode the psychedelic wave. "We were fortunate to be on the first crest and surfed the curl along with many others," he posits. "And the wave kept going. Now it's all over the world. Who needs drugs? When someone asked Kesey if he still took LSD, he said: 'Don't have to. We're like Pavlov's dogs. All you have to do is bang on the side of the bus and we begin to hallucinate.'" ❶



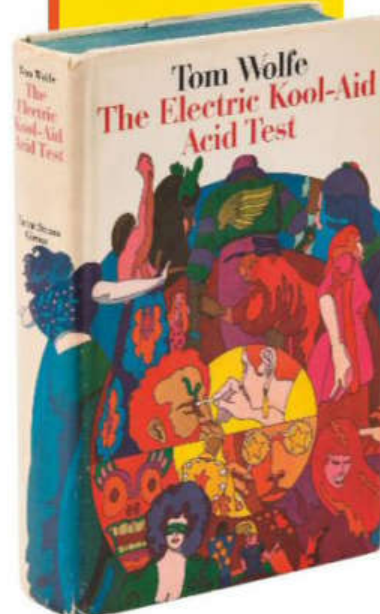
HIGH PROSE

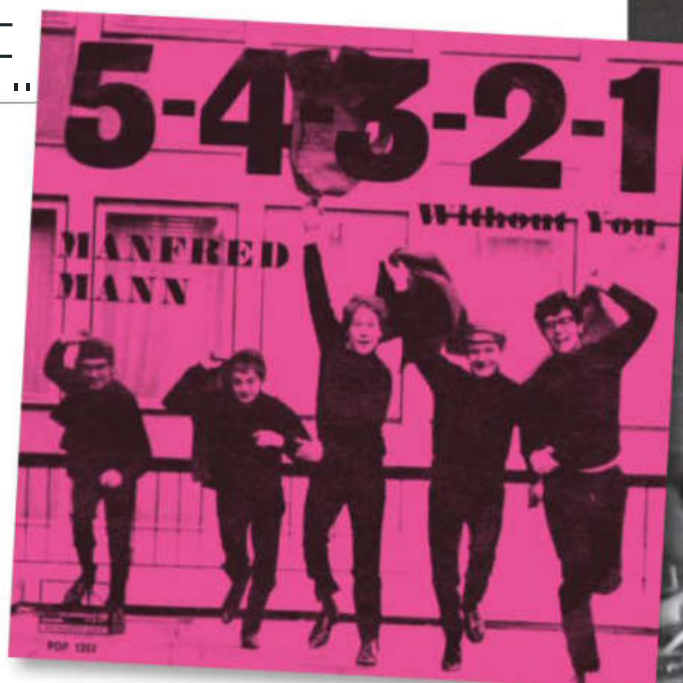
THE BIRTH OF THE KOOL(-AID)

WRITER TOM WOLFE (above) documented

the story of Kesey and the Pranksters in 1968's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, which became one of the early benchmarks of the New Journalism. "He did a really good job of not making us seem like savages with feathers in our hair," says Lee Quarnstrom. "He made us look more like seekers after the truth. It was the first book written about LSD and the first book about the San Francisco scene. I don't think it would've been any better if he'd taken LSD and gotten right down into the mosh pit, as it were." Adds Carolyn Garcia: "He did an amazing job of capturing the vibe. I don't think he ever got high in public, but he obviously had something going on. I don't think you could write all that without having dabbled somewhere. Though he would deny it, I'm sure!"

TED STRESHINSKY/CORBIS; GETTY IMAGES





5-4-3-2-1

BY **MANFRED MANN**

How an upcoming jazz-blues combo created the hit theme tune to *Ready Steady Go!*. “Suddenly, we’d all been changed into objects of desire,” says singer Paul Jones

PAUL JONES has a clear memory of submitting “5-4-3-2-1” to TV bosses at *Ready Steady Go!*. “We’d filled the brief and the finished article was so strong,” recalls the singer.

“I thought, ‘We’ve got it!’ I was a massively confident type of person back then.”

His brashness turned out to be well-placed. Released in January 1964, “5-4-3-2-1” not only became the flagship theme to Britain’s most happening new music show, it gave Manfred Mann their first major hit. Led by South African exile Manfred Lubowitz and drummer Mike Hugg, the band began in 1962 as the Mann-Hugg Blues Combo, playing jazz at Butlin’s in Clacton-on-Sea. The graduation to London clubland was swift, though it wasn’t until the arrival of Jones in December that year that the band became involved with the nascent R’n’B scene. The Mann-Hugg Blues Brothers, as they were known, held court at the Marquee and Crawdaddy, before the major labels – Pye, Decca and EMI – came calling. The group chose the latter’s HMV imprint as their preferred home, upon which, house producer John Burgess insisted they change their name to the more digestible Manfred Mann.

The band, in a variety of incarnations, went on to rack up 13 Top 10 successes during the ’60s, chief among them “Do-Wah-Diddy-Diddy”, “Pretty Flamingo” and a cover of Dylan’s

“Mighty Quinn”. But the frenetic pop-blues of “5-4-3-2-1”, with its squealing harmonica, self-reflexive lyrics and sampled lines from Tennyson’s *The Charge Of The Light Brigade*, occupies a special place in their canon. “There were many more satisfying and meaningful moments in later years,” says Mann, “but discovering we’d had our first hit was the most exciting. It would change all our lives.” **ROB HUGHES**

MANFRED MANN: After months of playing small clubs around the south coast in 1963, we were asked to play a residency every Monday night at the Marquee in London. The Marquee was the place to play, though the slight downside was that Monday was the least prestigious night to be there. But we were very happy to say yes. Some weeks later, a television producer came down and asked if we’d write the theme for a new show.

PAUL JONES: He approached our manager, Ken Pitt, and said they wanted a tune for their new Friday night youth programme, *Ready*

KEY PLAYERS



Paul Jones
Lead vocals,
harmonica, maracas



Manfred Mann
Keyboards



Dave Richmond
Bass



Mike Hugg
Drums



Tom McGuinness
Bass

Steady Go!. He’d heard our first two singles, neither of which made the charts, and liked them. The first one was a slowish instrumental with a jazzy rhythm [“*Why Should We Not?*”], accentuated by maracas. The second was a vocal with a Bo Diddley beat [“*Cock-A-Hoop*”]. He was very taken with that mixture of jazz, blues and pop and said: “I’d really like you to combine the elements of both. Oh, and we want a countdown.”

MIKE HUGG: That whole wave of English R’n’B was just happening at the time and we were a part of it. We had a sound that they liked and they wanted something in that same idiom. Apart from the Marquee, we had three other residencies each week: Bournemouth, Southampton

and Portsmouth. They weren’t massive places – Southampton was the Concorde Club and Kimbells was a ballroom in Portsmouth – but the queues would be around the block as soon as we arrived. They were some of the best times in terms of playing and interacting with the audience. We got our whole thing together in that

Manfred Mann in
January 1964, with
Dave Richmond
(centre, on bass)



environment. I come from between Portsmouth and Southampton, so Manfred and Paul and I would stay with my parents when we were playing those gigs. We'd get together around my old piano and "5-4-3-2-1" was knocked into shape like that. It came together quite easily.

JONES: Actually it was quite difficult. It almost started to become like writing cues for a film, where everything has to be done with absolute precision because of the nature of the brief. It happened very piecemeal. Basically, we'd turn our attention to it whenever we weren't actually doing a gig. Every spare moment would be devoted to it. We'd be driving along in the van, singing ideas to each other. The fact that there were also writing sessions at Mike Hugg's parents' house makes it sound as if it were a symphony. But it was only answering some complex requirements.

MANN: My big contribution was to regard the programme as if it were a rocket taking off, and count down to blastoff: "5-4-3-2-1". Brilliant! How did I do it? The actual writing of the bulk of the song was done by Paul and Mike.

HUGG: It's amazing everybody seems to have a slightly different memory of how it happened. From what I remember, the '5-4-3-2-1' bit was my initial idea, then Paul came up with most of the verse lyrics and we thrashed the melody out.

JONES: "Always onward, rode the six hundred", comes from Tennyson and is one of the most famous lines in British poetry, so I thought we'd

start with that. Then I carried on with the quote – "Down the valley on their horses they thundered" and rhymed that with "blundered" – before deflating the whole construction with "Uh huh, it was the Manfreds." It was the Bo Diddley-type humour of that. It wasn't just the rhythms, Bo Diddley was a big influence on me in the way he wrote about himself. So that's what I was thinking of. He once did a whole song, "Say Man" [1959], which was a dialogue of insults between him and his maracas player, Jerome Green. Actually, I'd done exactly the same thing in the failed single before that, "Cock-A-Hoop": "Look out, look out, it's in your town/It's called Manfred Mann and it runs around."

DAVE RICHMOND: The time constraints meant "5-4-3-2-1" had to be only so long to fit with the titles of *Ready Steady Go!*. Obviously it was written entirely with that in mind, though Paul managed to get a plug for the band in there too, which I thought was rather clever. It was quite a revolutionary concept at the time, referencing yourselves in song on a major TV show.

JONES: I'd spent part of my school years in Scotland, where I'd become friends with the poet, Ian Hamilton Finlay. He'd started out by writing poetry in a conventional way, but then he became part of an international movement called Concrete Poetry. Finlay would say, "The thing is the poem." It meant that he actually built poems. Sometimes they were as short as two words and he built them as rocks or wooden-

hinged folding constructions or, in some cases, model ships and aircraft carriers. In other cases they'd be abstract constructions of concrete and glass. He heard what we were doing and said to me: "5-4-3-2-1" is the first concrete pop song." The point being that the subject matter of the song was the group who recorded it. From *Ready Steady Go!*'s point of view, the main thing was that the song had to match the visuals. You couldn't do something highly melodic, because it would've distracted from the fast-happening Op Art, all flashing squares and abstract geometric designs. So "5-4-3-2-1" had to chug along, which is where the harmonica came into play.

RICHMOND: We never used to rehearse as such, so there wouldn't have been any written parts when we went into Abbey Road to record it. We all made up our own. I'd liked to have done something more meaty on the bass, but that's how it worked out. We did several versions, but there was no radical difference between any of them. Maybe we played around with different tempos, because "5-4-3-2-1" goes at quite a lick.

HUGG: We didn't spend a lot of time doing takes. The first Manfred Mann LP, for instance, was more or less the live show. We'd go into the studio in the morning, have lunch, work in the afternoon, then leave and do a gig, get home, get up the next morning and do the same again. I'm amazed how we managed to keep going like that.

MANN: The equipment at Abbey Road was state of the art and the place was spotlessly



Swinging '60s shoppers: (l-r) Paul Jones, Mike Hugg, Tom McGuinness, Mike Vickers and Manfred Mann

clean. The maintenance staff wore white coats. It almost resembled a hospital. Four-track technology forced everyone to play at the same time, which may account for some of the spirit on the records, before multi-track. I'm not saying the old records were the best, just that there was often a kind of life to them, perhaps unsophisticated, but energetic. While we were recording, the [*Ready Steady Go!*] TV producer Francis Hitching was in the studio observing what was going on. And I suppose checking on us to see if we could deliver what was required.

RICHMOND: As far as I was concerned, I was just interested in playing in the band and having as much to drink as I could possibly manage. That's obviously one of the reasons why I was invited to leave. I was never a pop fan. When I first joined, we had Tony Roberts on tenor sax, who was a fantastic jazz player, and the band was very much a combination of jazz and blues. It was a great band to play in, I loved it. I had no idea they were plotting my demise. We'd done a gig on Eel Pie Island and while I was putting my gear in the car afterwards, Manfred approached me: "By the way, you won't be needed tomorrow night." It was such a shock. If I'd known about it, I might have even tried to moderate my behaviour, as they had good reason. I'd missed some photo shoots, was drinking a lot and was probably a bit belligerent too. So I fully understood, though they could have done it in a gentler way. Or given me more notice.

TOM MCGUINNESS: I was a guitarist, so the first time I ever played bass was when I walked

FACT FILE

- **Written by:** Paul Jones, Manfred Mann, Mike Hugg
- **Recorded at:** Abbey Road Studios, London
- **Produced by:** John Burgess
- **Personnel:** Paul Jones (lead vocals, harmonica, maracas), Manfred Mann (keyboards), Mike Vickers (guitar), Mike Hugg (drums), Dave Richmond (bass)
- **Released:** January 10, 1964
- **Highest chart position:** UK 5; US -

onstage with the Manfreds at the Ealing Club in December 1963. My audition with Manfred Mann consisted of me going to a gig in East London, where the only key question I remember them asking was: "Do you promise to play *simply*?" Because Dave was a jazz player, a really schooled musician. And I thought, hand on heart and having never played bass in my life, that I could promise to play simply. I joined the Manfreds that night. Paul and I had tried to get a band together before Manfred Mann and before I'd played in the Roosters with Eric Clapton. We'd kept in touch and

he'd tell me these appalling stories about having to buy extra pairs of socks and fur-lined boots to travel in this freezing bandwagon to play gigs in Stoke to five people. There were many times, in the early days of Manfred Mann, when they'd outnumber the audience. It's always tickled me that by the time I joined they'd done all the hard work. So I walked into this well-oiled machine and within a month they'd got their first hit.

MANN: I had no idea that *Ready Steady Go!* would become the big new thing on pop TV. Some days after the show, I experienced the single most exciting moment of my musical life. We were packing up at the Marquee and someone ran in and said that "5-4-3-2-1" was No 29 in the *NME* chart. I remember running down the stairs, shouting and yelling at the top of my voice.

MCGUINNESS: We were like kids. We just started dashing around and gibbering. I can remember being outside the Marquee and running sideways along a wall, like a cartoon character. Even if the single had never gone any

higher it was a knockout to just be in the charts.

HUGG: It all seemed to fall into place with "5-4-3-2-1". EMI also decided to tie in the title with our name, so we were all suddenly called Manfred. For a while we became Manfred one, two, three, four and five. And we had matching jackets that were based on one of my mum's old ones. We'd been travelling up and down motorways in the van for 18 months or so before that and playing in places like Butlin's. So *Ready Steady Go!* and *Top Of The Pops* opened up a whole new world.

MCGUINNESS: *Ready Steady Go!* was the first TV I ever did. I can remember sending a telegram to my parents. I don't want to sound like I'm a sharecropper, but there wasn't much money around and they didn't own a TV. So they had to go to a neighbour's house to watch it. Once the record was a hit, our schedule became insane. We had a datebook that was filled seven nights a week and we had to do TV, radio and interviews, as well as record our first album over at Abbey Road. Life could not have been more changed. Then we went on this tour of theatres, sharing a bill with Joe Brown, Johnny Kidd & The Pirates and The Crystals [*February/March 1964*].

JONES: It was our very first tour and we'd been hired to do a couple of songs of our own and then back everybody who didn't have their own band. Ken Pitt convinced the tour promoters to excuse us from backing the unknowns, though we were all fine with backing The Crystals, lads that we were. It meant four musicians and a silent singer had to create the Phil Spector Wall Of Sound. So there I was on shakers and tambourine.

MCGUINNESS: By the time the tour started we'd had a big hit and were given our own spot. Girls were already going mad for Paul, there was lots of screaming.

MANN: The screamers were contradictory in their behaviour at times. Often, when actually faced with one of us, the teenage screamer would be transformed; they'd be quiet and shy. But as soon as they'd retreated a few metres, hysteria would kick back in again.

JONES: We played a gig in Scarborough not long after and there was this mass of kids trying to get autographs at the stage door. One girl wanted a lock of my hair and was brandishing scissors a couple of inches from my face. Gently but forcibly, Tom removed them from her hand.

HUGG: There were some genuinely scary moments, fans hammering on the windows, roof and bonnet of the cars. We discovered previously that, as well as cutting bits of hair off you, they also liked ripping buttons off your jacket.

MANN: This nursery-rhyme song, with its blues harmonica, had done something remarkable. We'd all been transformed into objects of desire, or at least objects to be screamed at. Having that first hit was a milestone. I'd spent so long trying to achieve it, but I'd never given much thought about what happened next. We were now famous and our world changed. It was totally unnatural and surreal. 🕒

Manfred Mann's The Greatest Hits + More is available in shops now

TIMELINE

May 1963: The Mann-Hugg Blues Brothers pass the audition at EMI and sign to HMV. Soon afterwards, at the suggestion of producer

John Burgess, they become Manfred Mann
Autumn 1963: The band record "5-4-3-2-1", their third single, at Abbey Road's Studio 2

January 10, 1964: With Tom McGuinness having replaced bassist Dave Richmond, the band make their second appearance

on *Ready Steady Go!*, performing "5-4-3-2-1" for the first time on national TV
February 19, 1964: "5-4-3-2-1" peaks at

No 5 in the UK chart
August 1964: Manfred Mann score their first No 1 with cover of The Exciters' "Do-Wah-Diddy-Diddy"

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Q: What links Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Alex Chilton, Drive-By Truckers, Wilson Pickett and Cat Power?

A: The laidback, charming and talented composer and instrumentalist SPOONER OLDHAM, whose relaxed manner inspires trust in all. “When I worked with Bob,” he recalls, “I can’t remember him saying one sentence about what I should do.”

Interview: Tom Pinnock

“LUCKILY, I WAS born with a creative mind,” says Spooner Oldham. “Typically I don’t like to practise, I like to just make up stuff as I go...”

The keyboardist’s ability to come up with stunning yet subtle parts on the hoof has made him a highly regarded session musician for more than 50 years, contributing piano, organ and Wurlitzer to Southern soul and rock classics all the way from Percy Sledge’s “When A Man Loves A Woman” and Wilson Pickett’s “Mustang Sally” to Neil Young’s *Harvest Moon* and Cat Power’s *Jukebox*. What’s more, Oldham has had a parallel career as a hit songwriter for the likes of Sledge, The Box Tops and James & Bobby Purify, usually in collaboration with producer and songwriter Dan Penn.

Born in Center Star, Alabama, in 1943, Oldham began playing mandolin and guitar, then moved to piano in the eighth grade once he heard Jerry Lee Lewis. “I took first, second and third-grade piano lessons,” he recalls. “It was rudimentary stuff. I quit lessons pretty early, because I started writing songs and going off on my own.”

From the ’70s onwards, Oldham mixed session work and songwriting with a career as a live sideman for musicians such as Bob Dylan, Drive-By Truckers and Neil Young. Over the decades, he’s also appeared in the studio or onstage with Townes Van Zandt, Dickey Betts, Aretha Franklin, Joe Cocker, Jackson Browne, the Everly Brothers, Bob Seger, JJ Cale, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and more. Even he can’t recall them all. For example, his sessions with Judee Sill – “I must’ve liked it,” he says, “because I can’t remember it. If I didn’t like it, I would remember it!”

At 72, he’s still touring with Penn and has recently welcomed a reissue of his only solo album, 1972’s overlooked *Pot Luck*. One of the most impressive things about Oldham, however – in common with his peers, such as Steve Cropper – is how relaxed he has always been about his work, a quality that he places central to his talent.



“I make it sound easy? I think that’s the idea. That’s a good thing when the music is relaxed,” he says. “It’s hard to conjure it up or manufacture it, it’s got to be real or people know it’s not.

“I don’t have an idea how many records I’ve played on – I never kept count – and I don’t know how many songs I’ve written. Karen, my wife, says not enough!”

SPOONER & THE SPOONS WISH YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO

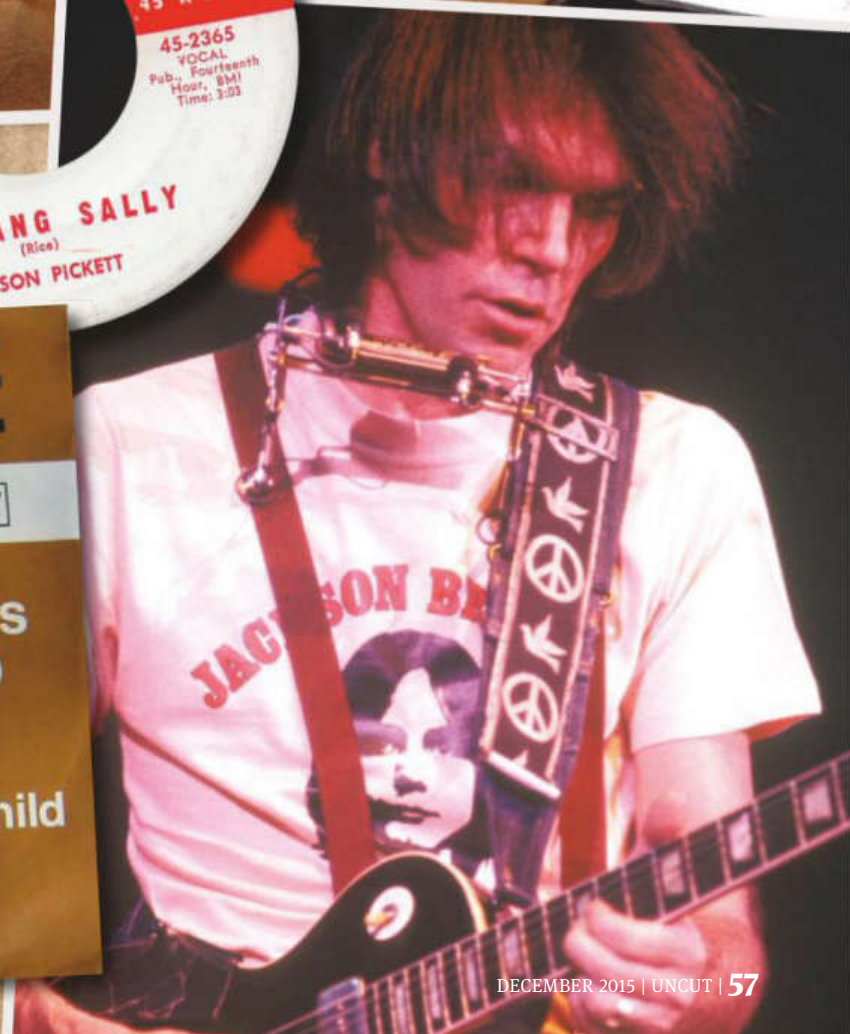
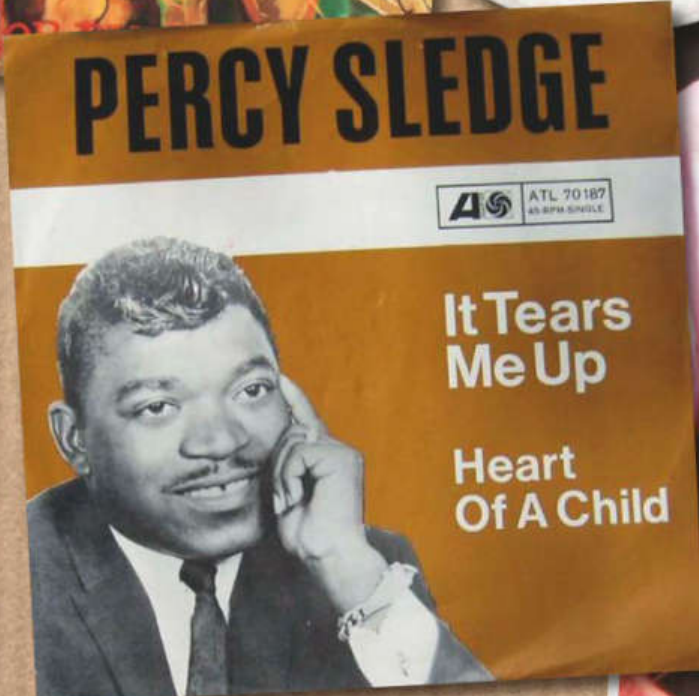
FAME, 1965

In his early twenties and already a successful session musician, Oldham tried a hand at making his own record – a swinging slice of smooth R’n’B.

At that time, I was the keyboard player in mostly everything that came through the FAME studio. As well as playing in the house band, I was a songwriter for FAME publishing company. I decided I wanted to produce something myself as an artist, so I paid for studio time, and hired musicians. I wasn’t used to singing vocals, so I thought, ‘I’m going to get together locally all my best friends who sing good.’ Dan Penn was either engineering or singing, and we wrote the song together. On the record it says produced by Rick Hall – that’s true in a sense, but he wasn’t there when it was recorded. After the recording, Rick Hall heard it and FAME released it. That was one of my first.

I first met Dan Penn when we were teenagers in Florence, Alabama, at the city drugstore. [FAME co-founder] Tom Stafford rented the space upstairs from his dad. It had an upright piano and a tape recorder, 15in per second, which was unusually high-quality for a little mono recorder. The place was getting heard through the grapevine, and Dan came up from Vernon, Alabama. So I met him up there one day. He later met his wife Linda, and they moved up to Florence. He was a teenager but he had already written a hit record for Conway Twitty, “Is A Blue Bird Blue?” I knew he was a songwriter, and that was something I was aspiring to be. So we got together to try and write. The chemistry was good, so we just kept it up through the years.

With Wilson Pickett in FAME studios, Muscle Shoals, 1966. Below: Neil Young live in '78. Inset, below left: some of the records to which Oldham has contributed





C/wise from top left: Gram Parsons, Chris Ethridge, Chris Hillman, Sneaky Pete Kleinow

GO WEST

“LINDA RONSTADT COOKED A CAKE...”

Spooner Oldham on hanging out with the country-rock set

“I MET [the Flying Burrito Brothers’] Chris Ethridge

when he stopped by FAME on his way to Hollywood when I was playing there one day. Then years later we met up again, when I moved out there, and he introduced me to a lot of Southern Californian pop and rock artists and they in turn used me to play on their solo records – Roger McGuinn, Gene Clark and Gram Parsons. They were all nice guys and really creative people.

“I remember going to Gene Clark’s house one night, and his wife cooked up a meal – Karen and I still talk about it! It was a simple dish, but it was really good. I toured and played on a record with Linda Ronstadt, and she, her boyfriend, JD Souther, Karen and I went to the park one time. Linda had cooked a cake – she was apologising that she had overcooked it. I remember a bumblebee kept chasing us. It really bothered her that day.”

JAMES & BOBBY PURIFY I'M YOUR PUPPET

BELL, 1966

This much-covered hit for the Florida duo was written by Oldham and Penn months before, but actually forgotten until it was dug out by their producer.

Papa Don Schroeder brought these two soul boys up from Florida who nobody heard of or knew. I had met Papa Don briefly. He came in with a business suit and a leather suitcase, looking really dapper. I said, “Hey Don, we’re going to have a good time today, hope you brought some good songs!” He said, “I don’t have any songs...” So someone sent him up to a room filled with demo tapes, set a recorder on the desk and he started listening to tapes. After a while, he came downstairs shaking a tape and saying he found something. It was “The Puppet”, that’s what it was called back then. We started working on it. It took us hours to get it together. We had singers and the band, which included me, Roger Hawkins on drums and David Hood playing trombone, among others. Dan Penn produced the song. I don’t know how long before that we had actually written it, but I don’t think you ever forget something totally.

In that period, you might do one song one day and three or four the next; it depended on how things went. Usually the most difficult pieces musically went the fastest. But if someone said, “This one should be easy, it only has three chords,” then we’d spend hours on that thing.

We usually started at 10am and would go into the evening. There was no set schedule; most people started at ten in the morning and worked all day. We didn’t do a whole lot of night sessions, because a lot of people worked in nightclubs for a living. You had to drive 20 miles for that, as our county was a dry county, so alcohol was illegal. You had to go to Tennessee to drink, so the nightclub scenes were flourishing along the Tennessee state line.

PERCY SLEDGE IT TEARS ME UP

ATLANTIC, 1966

Reaching No 20 on the US Billboard Charts, Sledge’s third single was written by Oldham and Penn, and followed Oldham’s appearance as keyboardist on Sledge’s classic “When A Man Loves A Woman”.

Percy was always fun to play music with – like all great artists, he was just singing the song, but in this case he sang my song in a wonderful way. He was always believable; I could believe what he was singing. I got to work with a good band again, including David Hood,



who told me his first time to play bass on a record instead of brass was [Sledge’s previous single] “Warm And Tender Love”, so he must have been playing on this. Those were fun times following “When A Man Loves A Woman” – that’s a high bar to try and reach, and we tried. I played the Wurlitzer a lot then;

I never played the Rhodes much.

There were a lot of hit records featuring the Rhodes, but I avoided anything that sounded like a hit. I wanted to do my own thing. I’m still choosing what instrument to use; what would sound best. Or sometimes I ask if they have any thoughts – piano, organ, electric piano. I usually know. Most of the time I hear something and know immediately. I guess that’s why I get paid.



Wilson Pickett in New York, 1965

WILSON PICKETT MUSTANG SALLY

ATLANTIC, 1966

This version of Mack Rice’s song made it to the Top 30 in both Britain and America, propelled by Pickett’s skilful delivery and Oldham’s Harley-apeing keyboard part.

The beauty of being an artist at the time was that the artists and producers expected us to make up a part. It’s what we called a hidden arrangement. There were no written arrangements; I mean, we would hear a song as a demo by the songwriter with just a vocal and one instrument, so from that you could write down chord changes, and the rest was up to you. You had to find the part. There was nobody telling you what to do. It was wonderful, and always challenging.

My part in this was just off the top of my head – I remember sitting in the studio; I think I’d heard a little demo from Mack Rice who wrote the song. Of course, in this version we did it totally different. I remember sitting there thinking, “Well, I want to play on this record, but there’s no keyboard on the demo, so I got to be creative and make up a part here.”

I guess for a moment I daydreamed and thought, “What it would sound like if I rode a Harley-Davidson through the studio?” And that’s the part I play on the keys, the motorcycle part. I think Rick Hall was up in the control room. He really turned on the echo when I did the ‘wop wop wop’ part, which I think made it more magical.



THE BOX TOPS CRY LIKE A BABY

MALA, 1968

Conjured up after a frenzied all-night songwriting session, Oldham and Penn’s next hit was written for a young

Alex Chilton, later of Big Star, and his band, who had scored a US No 1 with "The Letter" the previous summer.

Alex Chilton was 18 years old then, and I was about 24. He was a young person, but he was wanting to do music, wanting to sing. Dan and I basically wrote this song for The Box Tops because Dan said they were getting sent a lot of songs but they didn't fit the band. So we got together to try and write a song for them, which was unusual – we didn't usually custom-write that much; usually we just wrote and hoped someone would like it. We brought along a list of titles and one-liners we had, like five or six each, but those all ended up in the trash. We wrote all night, couldn't get anything, then quit and said, "Let's go across the street to a café to eat breakfast and then go home." We shut off the power and the lights in the studio and went across the street. It was just me, Dan and the cook in this café. It was early in the morning, and I laid my head down on the table and said, "I could just cry like a baby." And Dan said, "What did you say? I like that." I don't know if we finished breakfast or not, but we rushed across to the studio. Dan said, "I'll turn on the lights, you turn on the organ, put on a 90-minute recording tape," and we just wrote the song. We wrote a verse walking along the street. When we played it to Alex, he smiled and reached out and shook my hand. I didn't know what we had at that point.

Another interesting day for me was the day it was recorded. In a dark corner of the studio, there was a UPS/FedEx kind of box. No-one was expecting any mail at all, so the guitarist Reggie Young went back to see what it was. He opened it up and it was a Coral electric sitar. He plugged in and there we go, it was on the record. It was such a coincidence. That was a nice day in a lot of ways for me.



SPOONER OLDHAM POT LUCK FAMILY, 1972

As the '70s began, Oldham fell into making his own album. Despite its charms – the first side featuring new songs and the second a medley of tracks including "Cry Like A Baby" and spiritual "Will The Circle Be Unbroken" – *Pot Luck* was mostly forgotten until *Light In The Attic* reissued it this year.

Karen and I had moved to Los Angeles to be part of a house band – Emory Gordy Jr on bass, Richard Bennett on guitar, Dennis St John on drums. There was a studio, all put together to record, but we didn't really have any artists. We did a Liberace album [1970's *A Brand New Me*] because the people who owned the studio represented him. But we needed more to do. They probably knew me as a songwriter and a piano player, so I sang a little bit. I didn't go and say, "I want to do a record," it was just something for all of us to play on and do. It was off the cuff. Karen and I wrote one called "1980", when we had just moved to Los Angeles. I was reflecting on what I saw; the smog was really heavy and thick, and I was just noticing what I saw every day.



Oldham performing with Neil Young at San Francisco's Grand Regency Ballroom on November 18, 2011



I wasn't comfortable being the main artist. It's not something I ever tried to be. If I ever performed a song from this album again, I'd have to practise and learn it. I haven't played them since I recorded them. I did a local TV show, but I never tried to get any bookings. Plus, the record was one of seven album releases that month by the record label, which then went bankrupt. They're real collectible because of the rarity. Now I'll

have a vinyl record and a CD out [on *Light In The Attic*]. I'm grateful that more people can hear it than the first time out.



NEIL YOUNG COMES A TIME

REPRISE, 1978

Young employed Oldham on a number of records and tours – including *Harvest Moon* (replacing Jack

Nitzsche in the Stray Gators), the International Harvesters live shows, Young's 2006 concert film, *Heart Of Gold*, and the Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young tour of the same year, based on Young's *Living With War* album – along with this late-'70s classic.

I got a call saying, "Will you come to Nashville to play on a Neil Young album?" I didn't know him, but I went along and played on the *Comes A Time* album. Ever since that day, every three or four years I'd play on another album and probably do a tour. But now it's been four years and I haven't played with him. I've been playing lately with his wife, Pegi Young, in her Survivors band.

Neil's a prolific writer, and sings and plays all the time. He'll sit or stand at the mic and play his guitar and sing, like one of the guys. There's rarely much talking, maybe "Let's do it again..." He's like all good artists – they pretty much take care of their territory and let you take care of yours. I don't reckon he ever told me what do at all. Like most artists – they've got their hands full with their thing, and it's all good that way for the most part.

"THEY ONLY DO FIRST CLASS"

Oldham on the differences between studio and live work

“ONCE UPON a time I liked studio work better. I was lucky to have a lot of work there when I was younger. I wondered why anyone would want to do anything else but work on a record, go home, eat supper and go to bed, then come back and do it again tomorrow! In the '70s they were starting to sign bands that wrote and played their own music, so there was less demand for a session player. When I got a call asking if I would do a tour with Dickey Betts I thought, 'Well, I don't think I want to, but I got to be smart. Maybe times are changing, maybe I need to do this and add touring to my resumé to continue working...' I didn't like touring for a long time, but I've adapted. Also, the people I get to work with are veterans, and they don't do anything if it's not first class. It's a bit different from having to rough it like some people still have to do.”



In Bob we trust: Dylan onstage at San Francisco's Warfield Theater, November 14, 1980



Cat Power in 2008



BOB DYLAN SAVED

COLUMBIA, 1980

Enlisted to play on Dylan's second overtly religious album, Oldham faced hostile crowds when they took the controversial record on tour.

When I worked with Bob in the studio and on tour, I can't remember him saying one sentence about what I should do. Before the *Saved* tour, I think we rehearsed for like three weeks in Santa Monica. After about the third week I asked Tim Drummond, who played bass in the band – he knew Bob a long time before I knew him – I asked him, “Tim, what’s Bob really like?” He said, “Well, he gets to his hotel and he’s on the telephone a lot.” Just that sentence surprised me, because you know you have these preconceived notions about how somebody is from what you read and heard, and I thought, ‘Well, he’s reclusive and he probably don’t want to talk to anybody, probably don’t want to do interviews, just let the music do the talking.’ So that surprised me, that he does communicate, aside from his music. I guess it’s of his choosing, probably – who he talks with and how he wants to talk. I remember one song we’d do in the shows, “In The Garden”, it had an interlude where he’d get his harmonica out – people loved when he got the harmonica out. I was on the organ, and we had some interplay in the instrumental section. He would play a bar and look over at me, then I’d play a bar and look over at him. But it was musical talk, not verbal talk. You start sensing what they want you to do.

I was surprised by how religious the songs on *Saved* and *Slow Train Coming* were – it was a total religious conversion. The first two weeks of the tour were at the Warfield Theatre in San Francisco – it was sold out before we even walked in the building. Two weeks completely sold out. We drove up in the van on night one, and there were a bunch of youngsters on the sidewalk with placards. I’m trying to read them through the van window, and it was something to do with protesting his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Of course, for the first three nights I think everybody who didn’t like it was there! We’d play a song and it’d be good, no mistakes, and half the audience would boo, half would applaud. I thought, ‘How strange is this?’ Didn’t know what that was about. But after about three days of that, it cleared out and everyone who showed up was appreciating it for the most part. What was surprising is how religions can have an animosity toward each other. It still goes on today, definitely.

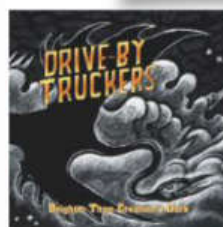
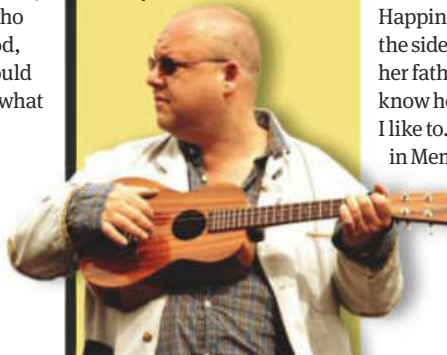
BLACK ARTS

“PIXIES?
YEAH,
TOTALLY
DIFFERENT...”

Spooner Oldham on working with Frank Black and seeing Pixies live

“THAT WAS FUN, to get to know Frank Black.

He was with Jon Tiven in Nashville. I think we recorded [2005’s] *Honeycomb* in his home studio in Nashville. He’s an unusual, inventive, creative artist, different from most people I’ve worked with. With him you never knew what to expect next. He was sort of challenging to work with; it was a different style for me. Then I got to see him later with the Pixies in London a few years ago. They were really good. Different from *Honeycomb*? Yeah, totally different.”



DRIVE-BY TRUCKERS BRIGHTER THAN CREATION'S DARK

NEW WEST, 2008

For the Georgia rockers' epic seventh album, Oldham contributed piano, organ and Wurlitzer, and co-wrote “Daddy Needs A Drink” and “Checkout Time In Vegas”.

I enjoyed our little time together. Of course [*Muscle Shoals* bassist] David Hood is [*Truckers* frontman] Patterson Hood’s daddy, so I would occasionally see Patterson when he was starting his band. He said he was going to make a record in the garage, he was like a teenager then. I said, “You know, if you need me to help you play on anything, let me know.” He never asked me to do a thing, but years later it all soaked in and he called me and wondered if I would do a record and a little tour.

They’re a lot younger than I am. I saw they had a big fanbase; in these clubs there’d be no room to stand. They had got out there and beat the bushes and rode the vans and stirred up some excitement before I got there. They were fun to be around and it just sort of happened – it was fun.



CAT POWER JUKEBOX

MATADOR, 2008

Oldham joined Chan Marshall on her second album of covers, contributing keys to the singer’s version of one of his classic songs and clearing up

the issue of her paternity...

Chan Marshall wanted to cover “Woman Left Lonely” [written by Oldham and Dan Penn], and so she asked me to play on the record. I went up to Brooklyn to record it with her. She knew my daughter Roxanne and Teenie Hodges, my friend who played guitar and wrote some of those Al Green songs like “Take Me To The River” and “Love And Happiness”. He was there. When I met her, we chatted on the sidewalk and I said that I’d read she thought I might be her father... But we determined it was not possible! I don’t know how that came about. I don’t see Chan very often, but I like to. Last time I saw her, we were both at Teenie’s funeral in Memphis [June 2014]. She’s all over the place these days, making a name for herself. ♪

Pot Luck is out now on *Light In The Attic*

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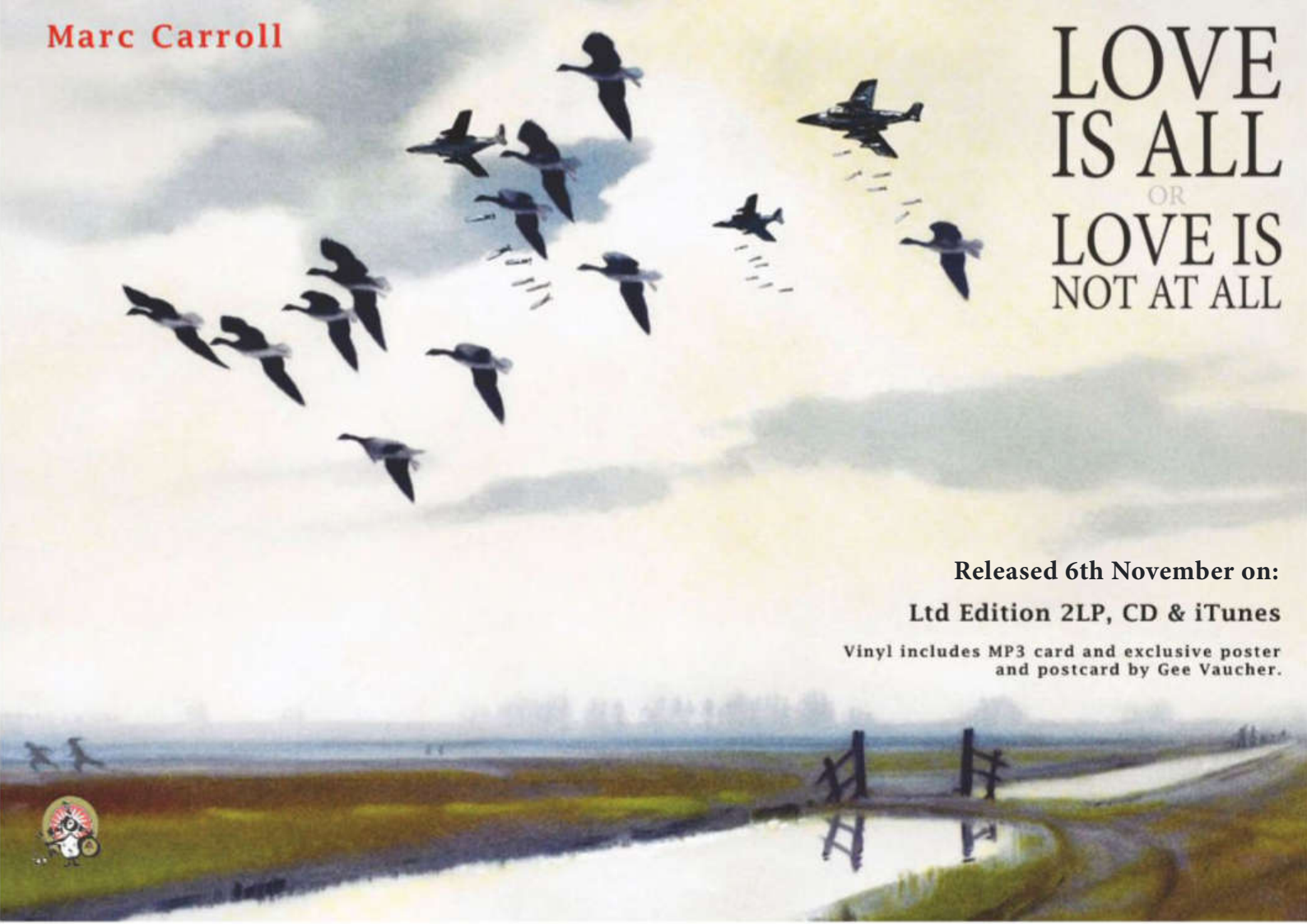
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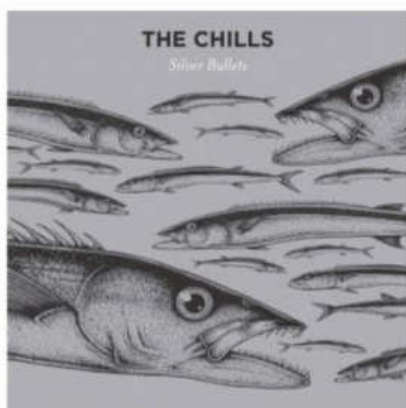
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TRACKLIST

- 1 Father Time
- 2 Warm Waveform
- 3 Silver Bullets
- 4 Underwater Wasteland
- 5 America Says Hello
- 6 Liquid Situation
- 7 Pyramid/When The Poor Can Reach The Moon
- 8 Aurora Corona
- 9 I Can't Help You
- 10 Tomboy
- 11 Molten Gold

THE CHILLS

Silver Bullets

FIRE

First full album in nearly 20 years from the mythical Kiwi outfit. *By Andrew Mueller*

8/10 NEW ZEALAND HAS had an inestimable impact on The Chills. Had singer, guitarist and songwriter Martin Phillipps hailed from certain other countries, he would perhaps be regarded as a colossus. But if he came from those countries, The Chills wouldn't have sounded so strange, so askance, so like ghosts. The decades that have elapsed since the last proper Chills album – 1996's fitful, half-realised *Sunburnt* – lend their fifth LP an even greater aura of otherworldliness. To see a whole new album by The Chills on a 2015 release schedule is to feel

something of the entranced bewilderment of the fishermen who discovered in their nets the first coelacanth seen in centuries of centuries.

Silver Bullets sounds, instantly and unmistakably, like a Chills album. This is no surprise – during the group's years of relatively full-time activity in the 1980s and '90s, when The Chills were the pole around which the astonishingly fecund Dunedin scene and Flying Nun label revolved, Phillipps' vision remained somehow focused despite lineup changes that seemed on track to eventually rotate the entire population of his homeland through



The Chills in 2015, with Martin Phillipps, centre

the group. It is also a heartening delight. The years Phillipps lost to a well-documented descent into drugs and depression may have taken a fearsome toll on his time and his health – he has hepatitis C, liver disease and an uncertain prognosis – but his talent for creating these delicate pop confections clearly remains counter-intuitively robust.

Silver Bullets announces itself with what feels all at once like a determined statement of intent and rueful apology – the spectral fanfare “Father Time”, 30-odd seconds of gloomy choral portent punctuated by knelling church bells. Having thus acknowledged that the clock has been permitted to tick unheeded for far too long, The Chills declare themselves back in business with “Warm Waveform”, a song (surely) wilfully evocative of one of their own best-loved singles, the immortal psychedelic murder ballad “Pink Frost”. It’s a more upbeat employment of the template, however – a love

song, Phillipps grateful for the solace of everyday intimacy (“*You broke my night with your dawn*” is a characteristically self-lacerating Phillipps devotional).

There’s a recurring sense throughout *Silver Bullets* of Phillipps contemplating his gifts with a careful, uncertain wonder, like a billionaire recovering from a coma and being reminded of the wealth he has somehow accrued (indeed, Phillipps draws a not-dissimilar analogy in the album’s glorious closer, “Molten Gold”). So the title track is one of Phillipps’ breezy pop tunes freighted an understated lyrical menace, along the lines of “The Oncoming Day” or “I’ll Only See You Alone Again”. “Underwater Wasteland” is one of his

strange, delirious hallucinations, suggesting a Beach Boys single played at 33, like “Part Past Part Fiction” or “Submarine Bells”.

“Aurora Corona”, an addition to Phillipps’ lengthening lexicon of fretful

environmentalism, is also one of his glorious Buzzcocks-play-Modern Lovers tear-ups, a cousin to “I’ll Only See You Alone Again” or “Look For The Good In Others And They’ll See The Good In You”.

“I Can’t Help You”, a new entry to Phillipps’ canon of deftly wrought unrequited love songs – a form he

pretty much perfected back on “Wet Blanket” – is also a pop-punk wallop easily as resonant as 1987 B-side “Party In My Heart”. The second half of an eight-minute suite in two movements,

There’s a recurring sense of Phillipps contemplating his gifts with a careful, uncertain wonder

HOW TO BUY... THE BEST OF THE CHILLS

The hits and narrow misses of New Zealand’s finest

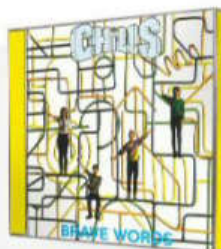


Kaleidoscope World

FLYING NUN, 1986

Effectively The Chills’ debut album; actually a compilation of their early singles. Regarded as the Rosetta Stone of the Flying Nun sound, distilling its defining qualities – melody, wordiness, melancholy – into such exquisitely mournful pop as “Doledrums”, “Pink Frost” and “Rolling Moon”.

7/10



Brave Words

FLYING NUN, 1987

The Chills’ proper debut pitted sparkling songs against inexplicably murky production. The songs themselves were magnificent, not least “Wet Blanket” – a perfect unrequited love lament which someone should have sent to Roy Orbison while there was still time.

8/10



Submarine Bells

SLASH/LIBERATION, 1990

The breakthrough that wasn’t. The Chills’ major-label debut was bright and breezy, with a lead single actually entitled “Heavenly Pop Hit”, lest anyone miss the point. Pretty much everyone did, but the music still resonates, suggesting The Velvet Underground produced by Todd Rundgren.

8/10



Soft Bomb

SLASH/LIBERATION, 1992

Uncertain follow-up *Submarine Bells*. Some great moments, not least “Song For Randy Newman Etc”, a bracingly honest accounting of the songwriting life: “*Patrons will not feed you longer than they need to/Your all-consuming passion will leave you craving love*,” indeed.

7/10

"Pyramid/When The Poor Can Reach The Moon" is a sumptuous triumph akin to 1990's monster hit single that never was – "Heavenly Pop Hit", a song at once transcendently self-aware and ruthlessly self-mocking.

Such flaws as *Silver Bullets* can be said to possess tend to be a consequence of underselling or overselling what are nevertheless good ideas. Into the former category falls "Liquid Situation", a curiously truncated 50-second snippet that sounds like the introduction to what might have been a great song – Phillipps presumably thought there was nothing to add after twice intoning the song's mordant lyric ("*It's a liquid situation/Intolerance precipitates our imminent demise.*") In the latter lies "America Says Hello". This also starts promisingly, a typically Phillipps observation about the simultaneous beauty and frigidity of the night sky set to another sepulchral backdrop of gorgeous gothic pop iced with Cure-like lead guitar. Lyrically, unfortunately, it subsides into a somewhat trite indictment of the United States' imperial

overreach. Lines like "*First a rocket attack then a property boom*", and so forth, might just about work when chanted, but certainly not when sung in Phillipps' careworn croon. Musically, however, both songs remind – again – of what a loss Phillipps' long silence has been.

The only genuinely jarring moment on *Silver Bullets* is "Tomboy" – not by any means a bad song, but one that feels misplaced. It's the only song on the album that is neither a personal confessional

nor a meditation on the ineffable – it is, instead, a straightforward sketch of the titular character. It is, as these things go, a commendably big-hearted gesture of solidarity ("*It's such a strange name/For just a strong girl*"), and boasts a(nother) pretty melody – he really can't help himself – buoyed by a melancholy violin. Measured against the broad sweeps of the rest of the album, however, it seems awkwardly narrow, and the taunting children's choir motif is arguably too Pink Floyd for comfort.

The spectacular best is saved for last. The album's finale, "Molten Gold", sounds explicitly autobiographical, Phillipps' urgent whisper longing for "*a dream you won't dream again, though you yearn to return, year to year*". This lament, and the subsequent affirmation that finds him "*breathing clear air, which can't be bought or sold*", is set to tipsy surf pop that could have fallen from either The Chills' 1986 breakthrough compilation, *Kaleidoscope World*, or the very heavens. It is, like much of the album that precedes it, Phillipps' ecstatic, exultant celebration of what – it turns out – he can still do.

SLEEVE NOTES

► **Produced by:** Brendan Davies and Martin Phillipps
Recorded at: Karma Sound Studios, Thailand; Albany Street studios, Dunedin; The Strong Room, London
Personnel: Martin Phillipps (vocals, guitar, keyboards), Erica Scally (violin, piano, guitar, vocals), James Dickson (bass, guitar, keyboards, vocals), Oli Wilson (keyboards, vocals), Todd Knudson (drums, vocals)

Q&A

Martin Phillipps on bringing The Chills' sound up to date

HOW IS YOUR health these days?
I still have hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver and I don't appear to be eligible for the new treatments or a transplant. But I'm taking better care of myself now that there are opportunities to make new music. So the future is still uncertain, but I feel more positive.

Does *Silver Bullets* feel to you like it has been (nearly) 20 years in the making?

Not really. There have been various other recordings along the way and I never stopped coming up with ideas for songs. Although there are basic riffs and concepts on *Silver Bullets* that go back many years, the bulk of the album was written in a little over a year once I was given the opportunity to create a new album in a quality recording situation.

How detached (or otherwise) from the '80s/'90s Chills canon does the new material feel?

It sounds like The Chills but with modern recording techniques, which was my aim. I wanted some sort of connection between this album and the older material before trying new directions on the next album. Also some of the basic riffs have been knocking around for years, so there is not quite the gulf between old and new that the 19-year gap would suggest.

Was there ever a point at which you'd resigned yourself to the idea that there wouldn't ever be another Chills album?

There were many bleak periods when it seemed we may never get the support needed to continue, but somehow the optimist within me never accepted that it might all be over. I had a lot of people who believed in me and I have long accepted that writing songs, recording and performing them is what I am here for.

What do you think it is about those earlier Chills records that has endured for up to 30 years?

I think my basic ignorance as to how songs were meant to be written – which is not much improved even now – meant that I created some very unusual structures and atmospheres. Combining that with my basic naivety and our determination not to sound like the mainstream pop of the time, we seem to have produced, if not whole albums, a number of songs that seem to sit outside of the musical timeline."

Is it easy to reconnect with the older songs when you play them live now?

Some older songs feel like they were written by a stranger and that can make them easier to perform simply as songs. Sometimes they feel awkward and then they are usually dropped from the set, for a while at least. Others, like "Pink Frost", are still enjoyable.



Are you able to rise above that indignation felt by many Chills fans that songs like, say, "Heavenly Pop Hit", weren't massive international smashes?

I was never indignant about our failure to really cross over into the bigger markets, as I don't believe I was particularly surprised. I'm not a hugely charismatic bandleader, and even our most accessible songs still have that slightly weird Chills thing happening, which will always prove unpopular with a larger audience. I am just thankful that, after 35 years, the band has such a loyal and widespread following.

How big a factor was/is distance in making things difficult for The Chills? Did you ever consider leaving New Zealand?

I always found returning to New Zealand to be a positive recharging experience but, at some point in the '90s, everything changed, including the workings of the entire music industry. This left the band essentially stranded in New Zealand for years, which I hadn't anticipated and was obviously very detrimental to our career. I know my career would have been so different had I stayed in the Northern Hemisphere and worked with various other people, but I made my choice, and I don't regret it.

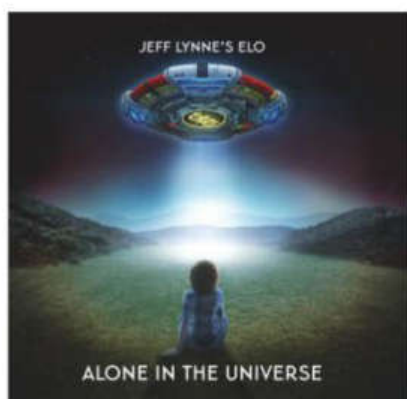
Other than The Chills' own records, do you have a particular favourite or favourites from Flying Nun's golden age?

As much as there are many songs and recordings from the early Flying Nun years that mean a lot to me, I find it difficult to listen to them often as it can be hard to separate the music from the accompanying power of the memories – even if they are great memories.

"It can be hard to separate music from the accompanying power of the memories"

Any plans for a follow-up to this album?

With *Silver Bullets*, my intention was not to do anything groundbreaking but to bring The Chills' legacy and sound into the present capabilities of sound recording as much as possible. With the next album, I hope to explore what our songs and approach might achieve utilising much more of the new technology. I hope we'll continue to produce new material as long as I'm around. **INTERVIEW: ANDREW MUELLER**



TRACKLIST

- | | |
|----|---------------------------|
| 1 | When I Was A Boy |
| 2 | Love & Rain |
| 3 | Dirty To The Bone |
| 4 | When The Night Comes |
| 5 | The Sun Will Shine On You |
| 6 | Ain't It A Drag |
| 7 | All My Life |
| 8 | I'm Leaving You |
| 9 | One Step At A Time |
| 10 | Alone In The Universe |

JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

Alone In The Universe

COLUMBIA

The fifth Beatle indulges his inner Fab Four. *By John Lewis*

8/10

NOBODY REALLY KNEW where to place the Electric Light Orchestra in the 1970s. They were too earnestly bearded for glam, too poppy for prog, never sexy enough for bubblegum pop, and rather too studiocentric to be an ongoing stadium-rock concern. John Lennon's observation when he heard *Eldorado* – that ELO were making the kind of music The Beatles might have made had they continued – wasn't really taken seriously until years later, when Jeff Lynne produced "Free As A Bird" and the so-called "Threetles" sessions.

The idea of ELO as a continuity Fab Four has never been stronger than it is on *Alone In The Universe*. Although recorded in Jeff Lynne's home studio in Beverly Hills, every track seems to be sprinkled with a touch of Abbey Road fairy dust. Opener "When I Was A Boy", in particular, is a wonderfully dreamy piece of '60s nostalgia from the perspective of an adolescent Lynne. "Don't

wanna job 'cos it drives me crazy/Just wanna scream, 'Do you love me baby?'" he croons, over Lennon-style piano vamping, McCartney-esque plagal cadences, swooping "Walrus" cello effects and the finest guitar solo that George Harrison never played. What's particularly astonishing is that Lynne is doing absolutely everything here – vocals, harmonies, piano, bass, guitars, drums, programming – like John, Paul, George, Ringo and George Martin melded into one hairy Omnibeatle.

"All My Life" is one of those wonderfully obvious songs that you can't believe you've not heard before – like a hybrid of "In My Life" and "When We Was Fab". The title track is a dreamy McCartney ballad set to Pet Sounds harmonies. "Ain't It A Drag" switches the dial back to *The Ed Sullivan Show*, with Lynne multi-tracking those pitch-perfect "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" harmonies and chiming Harrison Rickenbackers.

When he's not paying homage to the Fab Four,



Q&A

Jeff Lynne

This is your first album of original material in 14 years. Have you been writing all the time?

I'm in my studio most days, and I write all the time, usually on piano, sometimes on guitar. I write bits, rather than whole tunes – chord sequences, fragments of melody, odd lyrics. There are “bits” on this album that date back more than a decade.

Your 2012 solo album, *Long Wave*, covered old jazz and early rock'n'roll classics. Do you think this album has a similarly nostalgic vibe?

Yes. I'm trying to write nice songs in that classic style. When I started, old-fashioned was from the 1930s! Nowadays it's '60s, '70s. Was it a Beatles tribute? Not really, but I can see why you'd ask that. “I'm Leaving You” is certainly my attempt at the kind of song Roy Orbison would do.

Will you be touring this album?

It's not for definite, but I think I'll do a few dates next spring, in Britain, Germany, the US and a few other places. Hyde Park last year felt fantastic. The crowd were so warm and lovely. And they knew the words better than me – I did fluff a few lines!

Is it true that you always used to leave the lyrics 'til last?

It was the thing I'd dread. I'd have all these nice tunes and the orchestra, backing tracks and harmonies laid down. Then I'd have to chain myself up to write the words. I'd often write four or five alternate tunes for each chord sequence, so only I knew what the song would sound like until we mixed it! Nowadays I try to take a bit of time over the lyrics.

What do you think of all the hip-hop acts who've sampled you?

Often it's some quirky pseudo-classical bit in the middle of a song – they'll take that and use it as the basis for an entire backing track. It's a good idea, and I'm not averse to that. Especially as they have to pay me for it! *INTERVIEW: JOHN LEWIS*

there are nods to other old pals. “I'm Leaving You” is a rather vicious kiss-off ballad that's about as close as one could get to Roy Orbison's “In Dreams” without violating copyright law. “Just before you go,” he sighs over a dramatic Cuban rhythm, as if savouring the moment, “There's something you should know/I've found somebody else/And I'm leaving you.”

And there are bits where Lynne relives past glories. “Evil Woman” is recast twice – lyrically on the waspish and embittered “Dirty To The Bone” (“She'll drag you down/Until you drown”) and sonically on “One Step At A Time” (with the same slinky guitar riffs and shrieking, sugar-coated chorus). Best of all is the lovely, woozy “The Sun Will Shine On You”, where Lynne's voices – the bear-like baritone and the crystalline falsetto harmonies – combine to create his finest ballad since “Telephone Man”.

When Lynne last released an album, 2001's *Zoom*, the sales were so disappointing that a proposed world tour was cancelled. In the intervening 14 years, EMI and Epic Records have released 10 separate ELO greatest hits collections. Lynne has duetted at the Grammys with Dave Grohl and then Ed Sheeran, got his own

star on the Hollywood Walk Of Fame, been sampled by dozens of artists – from J Dilla

to Daft Punk, Common to the Pussycat Dolls – and headlined to 50,000 ecstatic fans at Hyde Park.

He's morphed from ignorable yesterday's man to national treasure, the high priest of the guilty pleasure, the writer of our unofficial national anthems. And *Alone In The Universe* is an album that celebrates that. There is nothing here that breaks new ground; no ill-advised dabbling in contemporary technology and – the slight reggae skank in “When The Night Comes” notwithstanding – no

unexpected jolts. This is a seasoned master of what he does operating in his comfort zone, and doing it very well indeed.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at:

Bungalow Palace Studio, Beverly Hills, CA, between January 2014 and July 2015

Produced by:

Jeff Lynne
Personnel: Jeff Lynne (vocals, keyboards, guitar, bass, drums, programming), Steve Jay (percussion), Laura Lynne (backing vocals on “Love And Rain” and “One Step At A Time”)

AtoZ

COMING UP THIS MONTH...

p68 THUNDERBITCH

p70 JOE ELY

p72 JEFFREY LEWIS

p74 JOHNNY MARR

p75 NATALIE MERCHANT

p77 NADIA REID

p79 KELLEY STOLTZ

p80 GUY GARVEY

p81 WRECKLESS ERIC



RYAN ADAMS

1989

PAX-AM

Heartbreaker takes Taylor Swift's *Tunnel Of Love* to Nebraska

5/10

Make no mistake: Ryan Adams' sad-bastard

cover of Taylor Swift's 1989 does not highlight anything about the latter's ironclad craft that wasn't already obvious to the millions that loved it pre-alt.rock makeover. But there are worthwhile curiosities here: his “Bad Blood” is utterly tuneless, but “Blank Space” is appealingly tremulous. He may add a Sonic Youth reference to “Style” to remind you that he is Very Authentic, but his sad take on Swift's “Shake It Off” highlights the absurdity of the abuse she fields for simply being a 25-year-old with a public love life.

LAURA SNAPES



CHRISTOPHER BISSONNETTE

Pitch, Paper & Foil

KRANKY

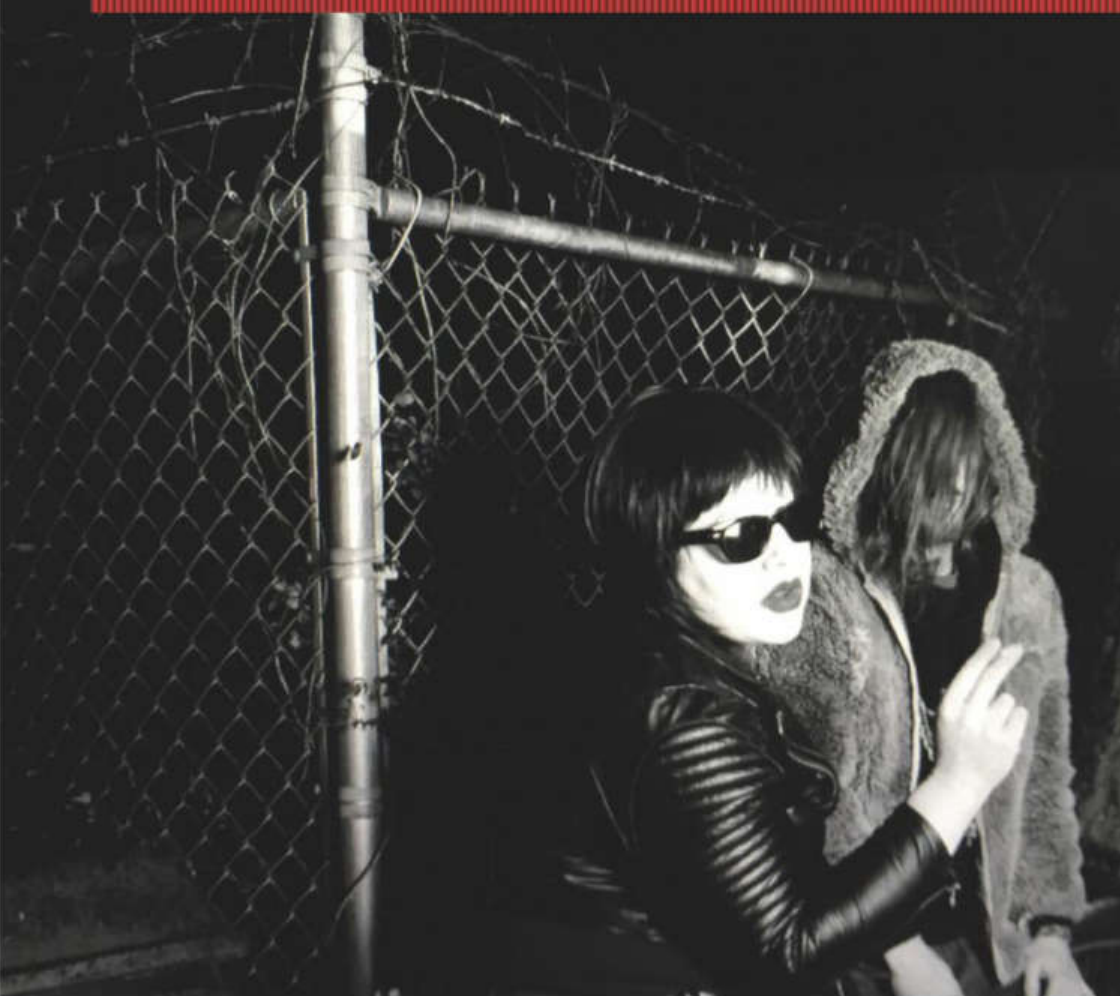
Canadian modular synthesis, finely detailed

8/10

Christopher Bissonnette's

taken the long route to his current, stellar form: starting out by messing around with Detroit techno, he moved through media collectives and installation art before time with the Thinkbox organisation had him working on ambient drift and thick, laminar electronic music. Following last year's *Essays In Idleness*, *Pitch, Paper & Foil* is his second set of modular synth experiments. The most arresting thing about it is its oxymoronic sense of stilled motion: there are beautiful details all through the album, droplets of rich, glimmering moisture falling on a static bed of hiss and blur.

JON DALE



THUNDERBITCH

Thunderbitch

BLACKFOOTWHITEFOOT

Serious name, heavy grooves. Alabama Shakes' Brittany Howard unveils her alter ego. *By Michael Bonner*



8/10

various spaghetti western scores; she added that she was also very excited about "some punk tracks" on the new Shakes album. It seems her appetite for similarly raucous kicks is still strong. *Thunderbitch* is a lo-fi adventure for Howard, recorded in cahoots with members of Nashville-based bands, Fly Golden Eagle and Clear Plastic Masks (who are credited here pseudonymously). "I just wanna rock'n'roll!" Howard (Thunderbitch herself) hollers on a song called – naturally – "I Just Wanna Rock'n'Roll". As we discover, Thunderbitch are principally concerned with celebrating the genre's insurgent qualities: "Mamma and Dad, why you hate my rock'n'roll?" Howard bawls on "I Don't Care". "It's been making me happy, and it's deep in my soul."

It seems that the roots of Thunderbitch stretch back to 2011. Howard first met Fly Golden Eagle's

Ben Trimble (aka 'B Bone', bass) when Alabama Shakes were recording their debut *Boys & Girls* at Nashville's The Bomb Shelter studio, which Trimble helped build. Another future Thunderbitcher – Fly Golden Eagle's Mitch Jones ('Thundermitch', keys) – played on the *Boys & Girls* track, "Heartbreaker". But the band itself didn't come together until late 2012, when Brooklyn's Clear Plastic Masks arrived in Nashville to record. In their downtime, Masks' Matt Menold ('Matt Man', guitar), Charles Garmendia ('Charm Man', drums) and Andrew Katz ('A Man', vocals) joined Howard, Trimble and Jones at Jones' home studio to work on two songs. Christened Thunderbitch, they posted "My Baby Is My Guitar" and "I Don't Care" on Soundcloud in October and played their first gig on December 15 at Ghot Wingz, an east Nashville chicken joint (motto: "Great Food, One Wing At A Time"). Since then, Thunderbitch have played only a handful of shows – three in Nashville and one in New Orleans – their activities presumably curtailed by Howard's day job. At least they managed to fit in time at LaLa Land in Muscle Shoals and Jones' home studio to concoct their debut long-player.

It's a brief album – five of the songs are under two-

and-a-half-minutes long – and accordingly, Howard and her co-conspirators set out their stall briskly. The opening track, "Leather Jacket", finds Howard bawling, "All those years that I spent looking totally fucking awesome/I ain't ever gonna take it off!" over Garmendia's walloping drums, while Jones' organ lines playfully stab and stutter away behind Howard and Menold's thick, grimy riffs. The signifiers here are '60s rock'n'roll, girl-group ramalams and '70s punk; the latter, particularly, exerts a more conspicuous influence on "I Don't Care", with its echoes of "Pretty Vacant". Meanwhile, the self-explanatory "I Just Wanna Rock'n'Roll" cranks out more scorched riffs as it galumphs towards its climax. The opening of "Eastside Party" evokes everything from "C'mon Everybody" to "Great Balls Of Fire", while Howard debates the merits of Eastside versus Westside parties (conclusion: "A Westside party don't rock").

At this point, it's useful to take stock of Howard's intentions. Evidently, Thunderbitch acts as an outlet for her unbridled musical inclinations; songs like "Wild Child" find her relishing this hellacious role. "I ain't no good/I'm a piece of shit," she hollers mischievously. These elemental, lo-fi songs offer a straightforward counterpoint to the more assiduous stylings found on *Sound & Color*; but that's not to say Thunderbitch are without chops. One of the album's few slow(ish) songs, "Closer", acts as a showcase for

Howard's cohorts. Menold's bluesy solo

minnows its way through the background, while Garmendia's drums lurch queasily through a quiet-loud dynamic faintly reminiscent of The White Stripes' take on "I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself". But Thunderbitch work best when at their most propulsive and focused – as on "Wild Child", at 1:43, the shortest and heaviest rumpus here. "Space father, give me some sort of sight," Howard asks at the start of the T.Rexy "Very Best Friend", one more rare moment where the band take their foot off the throttle and you get a flavour of

their musicianship. It's more '60s girl-group call-and-response with some lovely playing from Menold, who repeats a series of descending notes on the way out. Things get loud again for "My Baby Is My Guitar", another celebration of a key tenet of rock'n'roll, where Howard whoops delightedly, "I remember the first time I turned you on!"

The album closes with "Let Me Do What I Do Best" – Howard's plea for freedom delivered over some key-shaking piano riffs – and "Heavenly Feeling", a late detour into 12-bar blues where Howard's voice swoops and howls over some especially hectic guitar work. It would perhaps be easy to dismiss Thunderbitch as a bit of fun – a palate-cleanser for Howard, to let

off some steam with some like-minded Nashville buddies. But *Thunderbitch* does a far better job of capturing Howard as a performer than either of the Alabama Shakes albums have; here, her inimitable, flamboyant voice is given free rein, ably supported by her fellow Thunderbitches. The photos, too – of Howard unrecognisable in a wig and make-up posing fiercely in front of a wire fence – reinforce the idea that she envisages this as perhaps something more intriguing than simply a way to kick back between Shakes albums.

SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: LaLa Land, Nashville; Mitch Jones' home studio
Produced by: Thunderbitch
Personnel: Brittany Howard (vocals, guitar), Ben Trimble (bass), Matt Menold (guitar), Charles Garmendia (drums), Mitch Jones (keyboards), Andrew Katz (background vocals)



BLITZEN TRAPPER

All Across This Land

LOJINX

Portland veterans smartly stick to a winning formula

8/10

If Jeff Tweedy had travelled in a linear direction following *AM*, Wilco's discog would likely sound something like Blitzen Trapper's. Bandleader Eric Earley has a gift for shaping roots-rock tropes into sturdy songs with creamy hooks, and his band's strongest LPs, '08's *Furr* and '11's *American Goldwing*, new faithfully to the familiar forms. Blitzen Trapper's rock-solid eighth boasts a pair of instant grabbers: the title song merges *Sailin' Shoes*-era Little Feat with crunchy, James Gang-style riffing. "Lonesome Angel", with its loping, Band-like groove, Dylanesque harmonica and yearning slide, finds Blitzen Trapper "rollin' down the highway in the night", right where they belong.

BUD SCOPPA



BROLIN

The Delta

MEGASTOMO

Elegant but underpowered debut from the Lone Ranger of techno torch songs

6/10

A calculated air of mystique surrounds

London-based electronic producer Brolin, who hides his identity behind a mask. This Burial-style secrecy feels gimmicky and unnecessary, but it also feeds effectively into the emotional tenor of his music, with its noir-ish late-night shadings and plaintive vocal sobs. Sharing sonic space with the likes of James Blake and Jamie xx, *The Delta* is a tasteful tapestry of muted, skeletal house beats and softly throbbing techno-blues torch songs with sullen titles. But the liturgical tone and dissonant drones of "Tenderness" suggests an altogether more interesting LP lies just below the elegant surface of this sombre, self-serious debut.

STEPHEN DALTON



PETER BUCK

Warzone Earth

MISSISSIPPI

REM alumnus' clandestine comeback accelerates

8/10

For his third off-the-grid solo album (limited-edition, tiny label, vinyl-only) in four years, Peter Buck delivers a dozen caustic entreats in his gravelly voice. It's a limited tool, but no matter: he has a knack for humanist insights, as on the existential "Your Crooked Mind" and "Headful Of Rain", which recalls Crazy Horse at their most reeling. It's an in-the-red proposition throughout: even the would-be downbeat ballads, such as "Saturday Sunday Monday", oddly peppered with Duane Eddy-style guitar fills, are put through the distortion grinder. Buck's capacity for whipping his band – which occasionally features Krist Novoselic and Jeff Tweedy – into a frenzied free-for-all give *Warzone Earth* a transcendent quality.

LUKE TORN



BOOGARINS

Manual

OTHER MUSIC

Brazilian psych quartet kick against the bricks

8/10

With Tame Impala striding ever closer to soft prog-rock territory, Goiânia quartet Boogarins step into the psychedelic breach with a second album of fuzzed-out, trippy Tropicália. While their pleasantly weary, Portuguese lyrics rail at the gentrification wrought by last year's World Cup, non-speakers will delight in the nostalgic production, with "Avalanche" and especially "Tempo" suggestive of My Morning Jacket covering Os Mutantes. Founders Fernando "Dino" Almeida and Benke Ferraz intertwine guitar lines on "Avalanche" and "Sei Lá" like a more nonchalant Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd; the overall effect is a carefully constructed, complex yet breezy, psych-pop collection.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Car Seat Headrest



➤ "It's for people who need a 'first proper album' from me," explains Will Toledo, the songwriter behind Car Seat Headrest who, after releasing several home-recorded indie pop albums on the internet, has just recorded *Teens Of Style* for Matador. "I wanted to provide an entry point for people. If they like this album, then they can go through the back catalogue and get the whole story."

For *Teens Of Style*, Toledo revisited old songs from his large back catalogue, sometimes changing lyrics and adjusting melodies. "I did find it hard to sing some melodies, as my singing style has changed a lot since the time when I was writing these songs," he explains. A studio album of new material will follow shortly. "It will be a surprise for people who categorise us as 'lo-fi', but really it's sort of the purification of the pop-rock side of this album," he explains. "I thought that being in a studio might make me nervous, but it actually felt more comfortable singing and playing than it had in my home, because it was a space designed for it. Having access to that space, and all the equipment, was revelatory to me."

PETER WATTS



CAR SEAT HEADREST

Teens Of Style

MATADOR

Lo-fi indie angst from impressive young talent

7/10

Half-buried in reverberation and fully laden with angst, Car Seat Headrest's *Teens Of Style* is a heavy listen, featuring songs that date back to 2010 when their then 17-year-old frontman, Will Toledo, began releasing music on Bandcamp. Toledo offers dense, self-analytical lyrics and a style that takes in everything from The Zombies to the Pet Shop Boys, ambitious in scope and clearly much agonised-over. There's a religious fervour to the album, with tracks such as "Something Soon" and "Times To Die" culminating in apocalyptic calls-to-prayer, while the wonderful "Maud Gone" is a touching lament, with cutting lyric wrapped around a sombre solo.

PETER WATTS



RANDALL BRAMBLETT

Devil Music

NEW WEST

Athens local hero shows why he's revered by neighbours and fellow musicians alike

8/10

Over a churning, primal funk groove set off by Derek Trucks' slide fills, Randall Bramblett leans into his B3 and frames a cinematic vignette: "Crank up your motor, let the tailpipe drag," he drawls, "standin' on the porch with your clothes in a grocery bag." The track, "Angel Heart", one of several standout performances on *Devil Music*, evokes Robert Palmer's work with Little Feat. Mark Knopfler (on "Dead In The Water") and Chuck Leavell ("Reptile Pilot") lock in memorably with Bramblett and his band, while the smouldering title cut seems to enfold the entire sin-and-salvation panorama of Southern music. Bramblett is an undervalued American treasure.

BUD SCOPPA



CITY AND COLOUR

If I Should Go Before You

DINE ALONE/CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

Fifth outing from soulful Canadian pop act

6/10

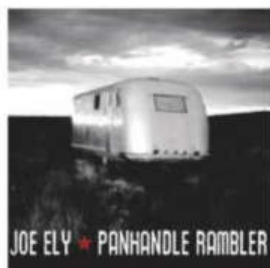
Dallas Green decided to throw in his lot with City and Colour four years ago, when he gave up his other job fronting noisecore quintet Alexisonfire. The subsequent success of *The Hurry And The Harm*, a Top 20 hit in the United States, suggested there was a much larger audience for Green's mellifluous voice and processional brand of folk-soul. He brings the same qualities to bear on this polished follow-up, most explicitly on the atmospheric, David McAlmont-ish epic "Woman". That said, the album's languid pace and lack of real bite often renders it a little pedestrian.

ROB HUGHES

AMERICANA



BEST
OF THE
MONTH



JOE ELY *Panhandle Rambler* RACK 'EM

Texan roots legend brings it on home

At a time when Joe Ely is finally being honoured by his native state, it's entirely apposite that *Panhandle Rambler*, the 25th LP of his career, documents the vast flatlands of his Texan home. Ely himself likens it to an audio painting, albeit one that shifts between the literal and the abstract. Having grown up in Lubbock (and now resident in rural Austin), the 68-year-old captures the wonder and desolation of west Texas through a series of allusive story songs that create vivid portraits of oil pumps, boxcars, old hobos and clattering iron trains.

8/10

Next year will see Ely recognised as the official 2016 Texas State Musician, following in the trail of Willie Nelson and Billy Joe Shaver, as well as taking his place in the Texas Songwriters Hall of Fame. And there's no better way to drape the bunting than with "Wonderin' Where", which recalls the vast radio towers that swung in the dustbowl of his youth, transmitting the music that would shape him. Dues are paid more explicitly on "Here's To The Weary", a western swinger that recalls the impact of Bob Wills, Woody Guthrie, Jerry Lee Lewis, Muddy Waters and more. The musical tone of *Panhandle Rambler* is rich, yet supple. Ely alternates between electric and gut-string guitar as his large band of trusted helpers (among them fine accordionist Joel Guzman) help create nuanced flavours of Tex-Mex, folk and bluesy roots-rock. The line between diarist and fabulist is zigzagged several times, most impressively on "Wounded Creek" – a mystic tale of disappearing girls, Greyhound buses and stray dogs – and "Burden Of Your Load", wherein the Devil comes hissing through the trees of a moonless country road. There are a couple of affecting covers too: Guy Clark's "Magdalene" and "When The Nights Are Cold", written by Ely's Flatlanders ally Butch Hancock. Though the most tender moment is reserved until last, with "You Saved Me" offering thanks to Ely's wife, Sharon, for rescuing him from himself. **ROB HUGHES**



THE AMERICANA ROUND-UP

► The main winners at this year's **Americana Music Association** awards in Nashville were two *Uncut* favourites. **Lucinda Williams** (left) picked up Best Album for *Down Where The*

Spirit Meets The Bone, while **Sturgill Simpson** made off with Top Song ("Turtles All The Way Down") and Artist Of The Year. The Lifetime Achievement Award In Songwriting went to **Gillian Welch and David Rawlings**. On the studio front, veteran songwriter and Kris Kristofferson ally **Donnie Fritts** returns with *Oh My Goodness*, only his fourth LP in five decades. Produced by John Paul White (The Civil Wars) and Ben Tanner (Alabama

Shakes), the Muscle Shoals legend is joined by an impressive roster of guests that includes Jason Isbell, John Prine, Brittany Howard and Spooner Oldham. Also upon us is the self-titled debut from **US Elevator**, the latest project from Johnny Irion. Moving away from the folk-centric stylings of his customary work with wife Sarah Lee Guthrie, Irion has assembled a band that prefers a more rockist approach, fixing a path between Gram Parsons, Crazy Horse and mid-'70s Neil Young. Meanwhile, Nashville's new country queen **Kacey Musgraves** brings her *Pageant Material* tour to the UK, beginning at The Sage, Gateshead and winding up at the Albert Hall. And look out for Southport's bijou **Americana Festival** (November 13-14), featuring Danny & The Champions Of The World, Amelia Curran and The Coal Porters. **ROB HUGHES**



STEVEN A CLARK *The Lonely Roller* SECRETLY CANADIAN

Arkansas native's electronic-soul second

7/10

On first listen, singer-songwriter Steven A Clark

is another who's hitched his personal pain and existential doubt to the downer R&B bandwagon. But despite intimations of Kanye West circa *808s & Heartbreak*, *The Lonely Roller* is more a modernist soul record with '80s synth-pop and yacht-rock leanings. With some input from a couple of War On Drugs players, these are widescreen but unshowy songs in which Clark's Seal-like voice depicts emotional drama with startling frankness; "I want love, I need love, but not you," he croons at one point. Even "Floral Print" – a heavy break-up lamentation in two parts, with Elfman-ish strings – avoids bombast. **SHARON O'CONNELL**



LANA DEL REY *Honeymoon* INTERSCOPE/POLYDOR

California obsessive finally strikes the balance between luxury and subtlety

8/10

Del Rey's third studio album dissolves her

previous records' clunky Americana signifiers into a heavy mist. The barbiturate vapour suggests barely suppressed hysteria and noir glamour, and the subtly insistent mood makes *Honeymoon* her most accomplished record yet. Del Rey still sings with exhausted anguish amidst smeared horns and the occasional hissing trap beat, but firmly establishes her own perspective: facing up to how "It's not fashionable to love me" ("Honeymoon"), while gravely intoning "You are what you are" on "Terrence Loves Me". It's her first record that could be a classic rather than just name-checking a bunch of them. **LAURA SNAPES**



DISAPPEARS Low: Live In Chicago SONIC CATHEDRAL

Chicago act successfully overhaul Bowie's "difficult" 11th album

8/10

While other "legacy acts" milk their masterpieces,

David Bowie remains conspicuously absent from the stage. Disappears, however, celebrated last year's Chicago opening of the David Bowie Is exhibition by taking on his 1977 classic, and though their alt.rock interpretation is rough and ready, it adds a thrilling, threatening urgency while highlighting the album's avant-pop tendencies. Shorn of Eno's studio frills, more atmospheric tracks suffer somewhat in comparison, but the imaginative, raw treatments afforded tracks such as "Breaking Glass" and "Sound And Vision", plus the sheer vigour of "A New Career In A New Town", might even flatter Bowie. **WYNDHAM WALLACE**



THE DRINK Capital MELODIC

London trio's second album reaches the parts other guitar bands can't reach

8/10

Additional to her roles in garage trio The Wharves

and angular math rockers Shield Your Eyes, The Drink foregrounds Galway-born Dearbhla Minogue's enthralling (often African-accented) guitar and dreamlike poetics. The group's questing, tripartite interplay recalls a transatlantic White Denim, but Minogue's vaulting vocals, their love of unusual time signatures and the dream-freighted, metaphor-rich lyrics make The Drink a singular intoxication. Ten pared-back tracks are smartly sequenced to peak with the joyful '60s West Coast guitar lucidity of "Month Of May" and the even more climactically radiant "No Memory".

GAVIN MARTIN



ESCORT Animal Nature ESCORT

Affectionate retro-disco pastiche from Brooklyn's answer to Daft Punk

8/10

Tipping their hats to the pre-digital New York clubland of Danceteria and

Paradise Garage, Brooklyn collective Escort combine vintage disco and synth-pop signifiers with more timeless deep house elements. Centred on the core duo of co-founders Eugene Cho and Dan Balis, plus glamorous R&B chanteuse Adeline Michèle on vocals, the band's second album has distant echoes of Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories* with its '80s Euro-disco sheen and sub-Chic funk-pop motifs. Such self-conscious nostalgia is stifling at times, but the best tracks transcend retro pastiche, such as the euphoric piano-house stomper "Body Talk" and a vivid, shrill, gloriously arch cover of St Vincent's "Actor Out Of Work".

STEPHEN DALTON



FITKIN WALL Lost GFR

Harp takes centre stage and steal the show

8/10

Composer Graham Fitkin is better known for minimalist compositions, but his work with partner

Ruth Wall – an occasional collaborator with Portishead and Goldfrapp – is an impressively intricate affair. Pairing two harps with autoharp, Moog, tone generators and a mysterious Red Box, the results are both mesmeric and meditative. "Trace"'s rapidly plucked harp melodies sometimes recall Penguin Café Orchestra, and "Highwire"'s dainty modular synth lines give way to quieter realms on the lullaby-esque "Carousel" and the atmospheric "Unseen". Studiously avoiding new-age candle-shop clichés, *Lost* is inventive, immersive and steeped in a gratifying melancholy.

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



FLOATING POINTS Elaenia PLUTO

DJ/scientist completes his cosmic jazz odyssey

8/10

Unlike fellow travellers Four Tet and Caribou, Sam 'Floating Points' Shepherd's

profile has mostly been restricted to dance-music circles, having spent a decade carving a rep as a DJ. Floating Points' debut, however, pitches him to a broader audience: as a club visionary whose music has now expanded to encompass rich jazz, ambient and classical influences. Much here, like the outstanding "Silhouettes (I, II & III)", sits elegantly in a progressive tradition that draws on Teo Macero's collage work on *In A Silent Way*, David Axelrod's string arrangements, and Four Tet's own "Thirtysixtwentyfive". Worth noting, too, another act that have artfully juggled a similar collection of influences: the closing "Peroration 6" is bracingly similar to latter-day Radiohead.

JOHN MULVEY

REVELATIONS

High times: Disappears' Brian Case on tackling and backing Bowie



► Invited by Chicago's Museum Of Contemporary Art to perform one of David Bowie's albums, experimental post-punkers Disappears rejected more obvious options in favour of the synth-heavy, Eno-associated *Low*, though founder Brian Case admits he never even asked his bandmates. "It's the one I'd most like to see covered," he laughs, "so it was pretty obvious. The balance for us was to be reverent, but also to interpret the material how we would any other music."

They spent a full four months preparing. "We knew if we didn't commit to some kind of vision for the album, especially the B-side," Case continues, "then it wouldn't work." Despite the time spent developing the show, they insist there was never any question of a studio recording. "We wanted to capture the moment, warts and all. That's what it was about: that one night, and that experience."

Case is modest about what finally emerged. "I honestly feel like it's pretty faithful to the original," he says. "It's just skewed, like looking at it from behind or something. But I think we've done something pretty different. 2017 is the 40th anniversary of *Low*: we should probably just back him up on a world tour of the full album!"

WYNNDHAM WALLACE



CHRIS FORSYTH & KOEN HOLTAMP The Island TROUBLE IN MIND

Premium freestyle guitar/synth jams

7/10

Forsyth's current day job, fronting the Solar Motel

Band, involves a brand of guitar heroism aligned to classic archetypes such as Jerry Garcia and Tom Verlaine. This second collab with discreet synth maestro Koen Holtkamp (Mountains), however, shows he's still attuned to more leftfield impulses. *The Island* opens with "Sun Blind", all feedback skronk and keyboard flurries, that daringly suggests Caspar Brötzmann gatecrashing a Tangerine Dream session. After that, Forsyth's more lyrical playing takes charge, with the lovely "Alternator" akin to early solo work like *Paranoid Cat*. Not quite a match for the pair's first, intense set, *Early Astral* (2011), but a useful diversion before the SMB return in 2016.

JOHN MULVEY



DAVE GAHAN & SOULSAVERS Angels & Ghosts COLUMBIA

More moodiness à la Mode

6/10

Soulsavers emerged from the UK's post-millennial,

down-tempo electronica scene, releasing four albums of widescreen atmospherics shot through with blues, gospel and soul that featured a varying cast of songwriters and vocalists. On *Angels & Ghosts* they take up with Gahan where 2012's full-length collaboration *The Light The Dead See* left off. It's a muscular and alluringly saturnine record with a vintage sheen, which occasionally tilts at the Bad Seeds but sounds more like a wracked Richard Hawley. There's spangled drama here, but as on "One Thing" and "My Sun", tone and settings rather hammer the obvious.

SHARON O'CONNELL



BILLY GIBBONS Perfectamundo UNIVERSAL MUSIC

ZZ Top veteran's surprising mix of blues, funk and jazz with Afro-Cuban rhythms

8/10

One might be forgiven for

thinking the world hardly needs another ZZ Top-esque boogie such as "Baby Please Don't Go" or "Got Love If You Want It", key tracks on Billy Gibbons' first solo effort in a 50-year career. Yet when the guitarist and singer pairs their familiar hard-boiled, in-the-red licks with Latin rhythms and transcendent B3 organ flights, the combination is revelatory. So goes *Perfectamundo*, seasoned with timbales, bongos and maracas, wherein Gibbons explores the art of the groove, especially on "You're What's Happenin, Baby" and "Q-Vo"; a skittering cover of Roy Head's "Treat Her Right" is the crown jewel.

LUKE TORN



JEFFREY LEWIS & LOS BOLTS

Manhattan

ROUGH TRADE

New York native's bristly hymn to his hometown. *By Louis Pattison*



7/10

AROUND A DECADE has passed since the start of the Great Migration, when New York's artists and musicians took a look at the spiralling rents in Manhattan and decided a leap across the East River to Brooklyn – or worse, out west into the no-man's-land of New Jersey – might be a bit easier on the pocket. But if NY's cultural centre of gravity has shifted, for Jeffrey Lewis, this small island borough still exerts considerable pull. Lewis was born here, raised by beatnik parents on the tumbledown Lower East Side of the '70s, and found his voice here too, playing his droll, touching acoustic songs at Lach's Antifolk nights in the East Village – a scene superficially similar to the Greenwich Village folk scene of the early '60s, albeit more influenced by the knock-kneed love songs of Jonathan Richman or mischief-makers like The Fugs than anything more strident or worthy. For many transplants to the city, Manhattan is so over. But what if you were born here? What if it's still home?

Lewis' seventh for Rough Trade, *Manhattan*, considers a changing New York, sorta kinda, but never head on. Like all his work, it's thoughtful, humble, introspective, funny and endlessly digressive – perhaps appropriately, given the fine penmanship of his Robert Crumb-ish comic-book illustrations, more about the fine detail than the broad strokes. By illustration, the record kicks off with a track called "Scowling Crackhead Ian", a wistfully performed paean to an old almost-acquaintance and "foul human being" that doubles

up as a sort of hymn to an old '80s Manhattan, where one might get held up with a switchblade on a street corner and robbed of the nickels and dimes you were planning to pour into a *Space Harrier* arcade machine. Today, Lewis and his unlovely muse still live mere blocks apart – but they've still never had a conversation, and Lewis observes him from afar as the traffic hums and the city slowly revolves around them. "How long until we're old man neighbours," he sings, "last tribesmen of the vanished land?"

Lewis is not the shy and faltering troubadour that cut his teeth playing solo songs at the Sidewalk Café back in the late '90s. Here he fronts Los Bolts, a tinpot not-quite-band of revolving membership, with producer Brian Speaker, drummer/singer Heather Wagner, bassist/keyboardist Caitlin Gray and guitarist Turner Cody – who played Will Oldham in the memorable video to Lewis' 2005 single "Williamsburg Will Oldham Horror" – passing through. In places, they whip up quite a fuss, a bristly punk rock crammed with words and anxiety. "Sad Screaming Old Man" begins as a tale of insalubrious renting, but thin walls and a neighbour prone to the night terrors ratchet up the fear until Lewis – in hammy B-movie voiceover – decides this might be a glimpse of his terrible future. "Have A Baby", meanwhile, noisily lists the futile pastimes, hobbies and "bullshit" with which the childless fill their time, before a twist in which Lewis reconfirms his pledge to the geek way of life.

If Los Bolts occasionally shamble, they also have a subtle, playful command. "Thunderstorm" is a soft, dazed bossa nova; "Outta Town" a beat-group jangle

with handclaps, exploring the sense of inertia when your lover is away; Caitlin Gray sings lead vocal on "Avenue A, Shanghai, Hollywood", a deadpan tale of city living that recalls '80s new-wavers The Waitresses; and "The Pigeon", a take on Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" set to driving, spy-movie funk that Lewis tells with much kvetching and the occasional lapse into Yiddish.

Still, it's hard to dispute that Lewis' finest songs are the most simply arranged, where fingerpicking and storytelling take the fore. In the wry "Support Tours", an examination of the life of the support band, told first from the perspective of a band on the way up, feeling screwed, and then as the headliner, being the boss and trying to balance the books, Lewis sings: "I'm in it for the money, is that funny/ I'm a working-class musician with no funding in my country..." It winds up with a breathless outro where Lewis takes on the persona of a booking agent, spilling off fees and dates and clauses until the poor musician capitulates. Then there's "Back To Manhattan". A cotton-wool Velvets chug tugged out to eight minutes, it finds Lewis walking with his girlfriend, a Brooklynite, over the Williamsburg Bridge as the sun sets. He's about to end the relationship and the song circles and spools, rolls favourite lines around in its palm, considers the future and observes the scenery. Sad and beautiful, it's like Lewis is trying to hold on to the moment for as long as possible – but if you're waiting for drama, it never comes, and as the two silently drift apart for the last time, you can feel Jeffrey Lewis again melt into the streets of Manhattan; home again.

Q&A

Jeffrey Lewis

By the sounds of this album your connection to Manhattan holds strong. As someone born there, how do you reflect on the way the place has changed? At this point, the way I see it, the only neighbourhood in the world not in danger of becoming the next East Village is the East Village – it's sort of safely dead and unhip, like the wave of gentrification has passed. It's not even really trendy; it's too passé. No hipster could afford to live here. So there's a sort of calm in that, for those few of us still holding on here in whatever weird little ways.

Is "Scowling Crackhead Ian" a way of looking back without succumbing to nostalgia? I hate nostalgia, I hate sentimentality, probably

because I'm too susceptible to it. I don't take photographs. I throw out or burn every letter I ever get, otherwise I might find it years later and get moony over it. I can't stand nostalgic art that tries to tug at my heartstrings; it's as if I feel it groping into my chest, trying to grab my heartstrings. So I'd like to think that I don't write songs about looking back, I think this one is just as much about present and future.

"The Pigeon" is, presumably, with apologies to Edgar Allan Poe. But is there a true story or real-life experience in here? Really, it's more like apologies to Lou Reed. Lou did his modern, reinterpreted version of "The Raven" in 2003. This is my own version of Lou's version, keeping it real for the East Side. It's also indebted to Tuli Kupferberg of The Fugs. When Tuli died, I ended up with some of his books, including his Yiddish dictionary, so I wrote this with help from Tuli from beyond the grave. *INTERVIEW: LOUIS PATTISON*



ODETTA HARTMAN

222

NORTHERN SPY

New York singer's mesmerising, memorable solo debut

9/10

Operating out of New York City, Odetta Hartman

adds her powerful jazzy vocals and weird lyrics to a haunting folktronica soundscape that lands somewhere between Amy Winehouse and Neutral Milk Hotel. Banjo and violin are the dominant instruments, with Hartman overlaying electronica and found sounds to create a sparse but tangible musical tapestry. She sings of mysterious men on the dreamy "Tap Tap", teasingly recites a favourite recipe on the swinging "Limoncello" and insists "I can't keep my hands to myself" on the countryish "Hard Wired". This is Hartman's unique universe, and she occupies it completely.

PETER WATTS



HD HAUSMANN

Wring The Moisture From The Surf

MARSHALL TELLER

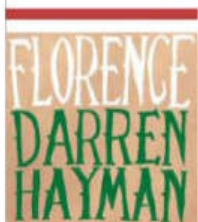
Poetic folk-noise soundscapes from mystery men

7/10

Songwriter Liam Palmer

aside, hd hausmann don't reveal their real names, but pay homage to French architect Georges-Eugène Haussmann in their moniker. Their former band, Grass House, referenced sonic architect Eno in its straight take on Americana, but on their first under the new name, they now exist in the swell between soundscapes and traditional song. In delivery and tone, Palmer echoes The National's Matt Berninger, and the compositions veer from the grandiose ("To The Loveliest Ocean") to the mournful campfire strum of "In Our Wake". In particular, opener "Old Satellites" is a lovely minimalist hymn.

ALASTAIR MCKAY



DARREN HAYMAN

Florence

FIKA

Perfectly poised romances on intimate solo outing from ex-Hefner man

8/10

Recorded alone in a

friend's Florence apartment over the last festive season, *Florence* is a beautiful, bespoke gem of an album. After the collectivist triumph of this year's *Chants For Socialists*, Hayman's delicately wry and personalised intimacies offer a riveting contrast. The laptop and guitar lo-fi loveliness of "From The Square to The Hill" evokes fellow sad-eyed adventurer Kevin Ayers. Yet, whether delivering tart rejoinders ("When You're Lonely, Don't Be"), hypnotic odes of endearment ("Break Up With Him") or doleful idolatry ("Post Office Girl"), Hayman masters a vast domain. Italian jobs come no finer.

GAVIN MARTIN



HERE WE GO MAGIC

Be Small

SECRETLY CANADIAN

Luke Temple dials back the intensity, dials up the humanity

8/10

Following 2012's *A Different Ship*, a supercharged

groove-fest produced by Nigel Godrich, Luke Temple is once again on his own and, as the album title suggests, the soundscapes are more relaxed. Here he shifts between buoyant rave-ups (the banjo-aided "Falling", "Candy Apple") and pastel reflections that resemble Arcade Fire's mellower moments ("Ordinary Feeling", the title track). Temple says *Be Small* was partly inspired by Eno/Cale's serenely burbling *Wrong Way Up*, and this album of artful, life-affirming mood music doesn't shame his intentions. If *A Different Ship* was the soundtrack to a road trip, the new record is designed for a summer afternoon.

BUD SCOPPA

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

HD Hausmann



➤ With a name inspired by ee cummings, AE Housman and the architecture of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, Liam Palmer's experimental group HD Hausmann couldn't be accused of taking a populist route. In a sense, they're not a group at all; the musicians have never all been in the same room together, and the project exists in the margins of the London-based songwriter's other band, Grass House. "The truth is," says Palmer, "I didn't want to be associated with it. Not through being ashamed, but because I wanted to see how it would be to build from nothing and leave the music to be the only outward projection."

The album marries Palmer's work with Grass House and his experimental urges, some of which were explored in the Eno-esque side-project Ayppl. "I wanted to figure out new ways of approaching composition and undo all the years of working within formulaic song structures," says Palmer. "When I first heard Tim Hecker's *An Imaginary Country*, I was taken aback. It made me want to figure out a way of creating such things. Creating noise music is like abstract painting – you don't have a destination in mind, you just work the process until something appears."

ALASTAIR MCKAY



IASOS

Essence Of Lemuria

INTER-DIMENSIONAL MUSIC

New-age pioneer summons spirit of mythical continent

7/10

Although Californian ambient guru Iasos has

been releasing new-age music for some 40 years – early tapes were titled *Crystal Love* and *Jeweled Space* – he reached a hip new audience with Numero's fine 2013 compilation *Celestial Soul Portrait*. His latest, *Essence Of Lemuria*, finds the 68-year-old diving deep into oceans of bliss to fashion twinkling synthesiser pieces such as "Buddhic Spherical Consciousness" and "Warm Tropical Rain" that wrestle with the notion of timeless cheesiness. For "Pan – Musing", a light blend of birdsong and harp, he claims to have received musical ideas and scales from Pan himself, and who are we to refute that?

PIERS MARTIN



BRIAN JAMES

The Guitar That Dripped Blood

EASY ACTION

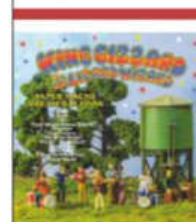
Ex-Damned man rocks hard

6/10

Brian James teams up with Cheetah Chrome of

Rocket From The Tombs for this heavy-rocking solo offering, rooted in thunderous riffs and unreconstructed Sonics-style songs obsessed with sex, sickness and mental illness. James hasn't lost his knack for writing a commanding riff and eye-catching lyric, and plunders rock's back catalogue in entertaining fashion – "Walkin' Round Naked" is cheerfully daft, lecherous and heavy; "Baby She Crazy" chugging blues embellished by a neat guitar solo, while "Mean Streak" has a sinister, Cramps-like strut. James' voice, however, sometimes strains to match the power of his feral guitar playing.

PETER WATTS



KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD

Paper Mâché Dream Balloon

HEAVENLY

Acoustic psychedelia, Aussie-style

6/10

This Melbourne psych

outfit tick all the right boxes on first blush: an admirably broad aesthetic purview, from fuzzed-out noise-pop (2013's *Float Along, Fill Your Lungs*) to jazz-tinged, lysergic improv (this year's *Quarters!*); a restless desire to change things up; a fine balance between the serious and the seductively strange. On *Paper Mâché Dream Balloon*, they've redrawn the parameters yet again – this album's entirely acoustic, dropping down partly in agrarian 1960s flower-child terrain, partly playing out like a miscreant gang hanging out in a blues club. But the songs – period pieces, admirably researched – lack that spark that turns pastiche into profundity.

JONDALE



KODE9 **Nothing** HYPERDUB

Hyperdub founder's first album since the passing of MC The Spaceape

The nine minutes of silence that closes *Nothing* is the starkest reminder of the

8/10

absence of Kode9's former musical partner The Spaceape, aka Stephen Gordon, who passed away after a long battle with cancer last year. Fine examples of the distended and distorted dub reggae that were the duo's stock in trade, "Third Ear Transmission" contains a brief final cameo by Gordon, while "Void" retains the spaces that his voice was meant to fill. Yet despite the sense of loss that inevitably pervades the music here, Steve Goodman's first solo effort as Kode9 also charts out some exhilarating new directions, as evidenced by the fractured take on Chicago footwork in "Respirator" and the mangled symphonic pomp of "9 Drones".

JASON ANDERSON



LANTERNS ON THE LAKE **Beings** BELLA UNION

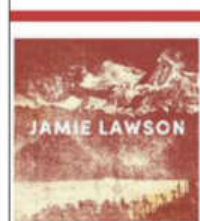
Still waters run deep on Newcastle band's third LP

7/10

After turbulent beginnings

in which two members abruptly left the band, the reconfigured Lanterns On The Lake have found their feet in the realms of gothic-tinged dream pop. There's a clear confidence in their third album, seen in "Of Dust & Matter", which begins with the sound of radio static, and in which singer Hazel Wilde's vocals build to a thrilling Siouxsie Sioux holler. Later, on the Mercury Rev-esque "Send Me Home", she takes on a quieter, more atmospheric vulnerability. Lyrically, *Beings* is a darkly melodramatic affair, with talk of fractured lives ("Faultlines") and drying blood ("The Crawl").

FIONA STURGES



JAMIE LAWSON **Jamie Lawson** GINGERBREAD MAN

Ed Sheeran's first signing goes for the jackpot

3/10

When a mega-seller like Ed Sheeran hypes

you to the hilltops and signs you to his new label, you can be sure fame and fortune will follow. Certainly, all the ingredients are here for guaranteed *X Factor* cover versions: tremulous vocals, gentle acoustic strumming and earnestly lachrymose lyrics about how there's someone for everyone ("Someone For Everyone"). These are sappy songs delivered by a so-so singer with real feeling, all of which leaves you wondering if there's really room in the average Sheeranite's heart for another acoustic-guitar-wielding man-child trying to suffocate them with his sensitivity.

FIONA STURGES



THE LEAF LIBRARY **Daylight Versions** WIAIWYA

London-based indie quintet's naturalistic debut

7/10

An obsession with

nature, seasons and water runs through this charming debut album from London-based quintet The Leaf Library. Songs are soaked in atmospheres that conjure thoughts of hazy mists and setting suns, especially on the gorgeous "Acre", a gentle, lilting shanty of foghorns and sea spray, and the drowsy but captivating flood fantasies of "Pushing/Swimming". "Asleep Between Stations" is the record's template, a drone sitting astride a gentle throbbing rhythm, and that sparse mood is maintained until the insistent strum of "Evening Gathers" brings things to a more vibrant close.

PETER WATTS



SON LITTLE **Son Little** ANTI-

Astonishingly accomplished debut from Midwest soul-blues auteur

8/10

Aaron Livingston

has produced Mavis Staples, supported Mumford & Sons and collaborated with The Roots, which may give you a sense of the cross-generational genre-hopping evident on this fine debut album. From Jimi Hendrix to Nas, Sam Cooke to NERD, via gospel, garage and grunge, Son Little reflects a catholic taste in American music of all periods, and all colours. His voice of loss is shrouded in inventive production: sepulchral, soulful and head-noddingly cool. The crack-house blues of "Doctor's In" is addictive; the aching "Your Love Will Blow Me Away When My Heart Aches" startling in its intimacy.

MARK BENTLEY



BILL MacKAY & RYLEY WALKER **Land Of Plenty** WHISTLER

New folk guitar hero finds masterly sparring partner

7/10

On September 9, Ryley Walker, a loquacious and irreverent Twitter habitué,

announced. "Next Rec written n jammed live! All shows from here on will be to promote our not yet finished LP." *Primrose Green*, released to much acclaim in March, was already old news; here Walker asserted himself as restless troubadour, always heading somewhere new. *Land Of Plenty* is, perhaps, a minor but beguiling stop on that journey, being a set of instrumental guitar duets recorded during a Chicago club residency last January. In general more courtly and serene than the ecstasies of *Primrose Green*, there are still rapturous moments: "Gold Season", for example, could just about plausibly be passed off as a John Renbourn/Robbie Basho face-off.

JOHN MULVEY



MAJICAL CLOUDZ **Are You Alone?** MATADOR

Music for sleepwalkers
"Am I moving too slow?" Devon Walsh asks on "Control", near the top of Majical Cloudz's second

5/10

album, but the Montreal-based duo show no inclination to quicken the pace. There's a surfeit of mood – unrelieved depression – as Matthew Otto's woeful synths and barely-there beats match the mood of Welsh's stoic, vibrato-free tenor, which rarely rises above mid-range. Everything's so tamped down that it's a shock when an otherworldly chorale abruptly appears in "Silver Car Crash", causing Welsh to briefly ramp up his ennui to anxiety. On "So Blue" and "Change", *Are You Alone?* hints at a Blue Nile-like melancholy beauty; otherwise, the album could be prescribed as a treatment for insomnia.

BUD SCOPPA



MARIZA **Mundo** EMI

World-music diva dramatically expands her horizons

9/10

A five-year hiatus

to start a family has afforded the greatest contemporary singer of *fado* – the dramatic acoustic "blues" of Portugal – time to refocus her aspirations. On her first album since 2010's relatively conservative *Fado Tradicional*, there are still oceans of deep *fado* tradition sung in a voice rich in theatrical effect. But under the guidance of producer Javier Limón (who recently gave Anoushka Shankar a similarly expansive makeover), she has added sparkling pop ballads ("Melhor De Mim") and even subtle electro hints (the shimmering "Saudade Solta"). Perhaps only the language barrier now holds her back from world domination.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



JOHNNY MARR **Adrenalin Baby** NEW VODOO/WARNER BROS

Live solo double from former Smiths guitar legend

7/10

One of the more edifying

narratives of recent years has been the emergence of Johnny Marr from hired hand to consummate frontman. This extended set, culled mostly from Brixton and Manchester during his tour for the *Playland* album, includes pristine versions of old nuggets "The Headmaster Ritual" and "Bigmouth Strikes Again", plus a hectic cover of "I Fought The Law". But the fact that solo pieces such as "The Right Thing Right", "Easy Money" and "Generate! Generate!" – all rushing choruses and stinging hooks – flourish equally as well is proof that Marr has hit a rich vein of middle-age form.

ROB HUGHES



STEVE MARTIN & EDIE BRICKELL
So Familiar
ROUNDER

Underwhelming return of venerable US pop-grass duo
Martin and Brickell

6/10

chose to follow the critical and commercial success of 2013's *Love Has Come For You* with a musical, *Bright Star*, which detailed a wartime tryst in the Deep South. The smoother, less overtly bluegrass nature of *So Familiar* betrays the album's origins in the show, the songs often forsaking folk for middle-ground pop. As such, it's not as striking as its predecessor, with Martin's banjo jostling for air amid the fuller arrangements of producer Peter Asher. That said, the agile title track and the thornier, Celtic-scented "Heart Of The Dreamer" are very lovely indeed.

ROB HUGHES



NATALIE MERCHANT
Paradise Is There: The New Tigerlily Recordings
NONESUCH

Career-defining solo album gets a makeover
Tigerlily was Natalie

7/10

Merchant's first release after she left folk-pop proselytisers 10,000 Maniacs. Selling five million copies, it established her as an artist of rare emotional depth and considerable commercial heft. Twenty years later she has re-recorded the songs, complete with documentary DVD, with her longterm band members and a string quartet. While the orchestral flourishes on "Beloved Wife" and "River" are nice enough, it's when Merchant pares back the arrangements on "Wonder" and "Carnival" and focuses on her voice (which has become deeper and grainier with age) that these songs really soar.

FIONA STURGES



MERZ
Thinking Like A Mountain
ACCIDENTAL

Conrad Lambert's strong return
For those who remember it, the name Merz is synonymous with

7/10

record-industry hype and profligacy. Singer-songwriter Lambert signed with Epic for a reputed cool million, but they parted company when the entertainingly wonky, housed-up folk pop of his 1999 debut failed to return Top 40 hits. He's onto his fourth independent release, originally a PledgeMusic project. Born out of improv sessions with other musicians, these intricate, electro-acoustic songs echo the ambient sophistication of Talk Talk and Harold Budd, with a little of Low's lonesome beauty. But there's wildness, too, notably in epic opener "Shrug", while "Serene" suggests a less self-conscious Vampire Weekend.

SHARON O'CONNELL



ASHLEY MONROE
The Blade
WARNER BROS

Sparkling third outing from Nashville country starlet
If 2013's *Like A Rose* sealed Monroe's status

8/10

as one of Nashville's keener talents, *The Blade* (already a Top 30 *Billboard* hit) suggests she's now one of the most bankable. Her elegantly emotive voice locates the dark matter in these songs about the complexities of love, lightened by sweet melodies and a stirring concoction of pop-country and honky-tonk. "If Love Was Fair" is as much Stevie Nicks as Dolly Parton, while a soulful groove warms "I Buried Your Love Alive". Fellow former Pistol Annie Miranda Lambert is among the guest vocalists, also co-writing the terrific "I'm Good At Leavin'".

ROB HUGHES

REVELATIONS

Yael Naim... moving on after her 2008 US hit, "New Soul"



➤ When she became a mother, Yael Naim resolved not to write drippy songs about the experience. Although the emotional transformation dominates *Older*, she's kept her promise. "I didn't write about motherhood or my child," she says, "I wrote about my feelings, as I always have done. But it made me go through so many different unknown motions that I needed to write it down, so I didn't become totally insane keeping it all inside of me."

During the making of the album, she also lost a much-loved relative and the title "expressed so many things, the cycle of change - to lose people, to give life, getting older". Co-produced with her Caribbean husband, David Donatien, musically *Older* is "fed by our multi-cultural background and belief that people can swim into each other's culture; we love John Barry, Nina Simone, Bach, The Meters [Zigaboo Modeliste plays on one track], Brazilian music, Miles Davis, Nick Drake, Danger Mouse... music that makes you see images."

Having a monster hit with "New Soul" early in her career was "an amazing thing to live", but the experience served to prove there's greater satisfaction in "composing and playing the music you love without trying to run after any kind of expectation".

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



Yael NAIM
Older
TOT OU TARD

French-Israeli singer finds freedom
Best-known for her 2008 American Top 10 hit "New Soul", Naim returns older, wiser

7/10

and liberated after a dispiriting major-label experience. The soulful "Trapped" evokes Alicia Keys, but elsewhere Florence Welch and Cat Power are more obvious reference points on a set of songs dominated by the theme of motherhood. The joyous and celebratory "Make A Child" is juxtaposed against the searing self-analysis of "Coward", with a spine-tingling vocal accompanied by piano sonata and epic chorale, while on "Ima" (Hebrew for mother and the only song not in English), Leyla McCalla, formerly of The Carolina Chocolate Drops, adds plaintive cello and banjo.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



NATURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY & BITCHIN BAJAS
Automaginary
DRAG CITY

Kosmische/jazz summit
Cooper Crain and Bitchin Bajas' discreet campaign to

8/10

establish themselves as this era's finest ambient/kosmische outfit has already produced a strong 2015 LP (*Transporteur*). *Automaginary* is a hook-up with another bunch of Chicagoans, Josh Abrams' Natural Information Society. Abrams' improv background is to the fore, as he and his bandmates provide organic rustle and scrape to the Bajas' lunar synthscapes. The twitchiness never detracts, though, from the meditative calm of tracks such as the Necks-like 19-minute opener "On No Fade", while the epiphanies of "Anemometer" posit an alternative path Kraftwerk might have taken after *Ralf & Florian*; away from the "Autobahn", towards an idiosyncratic take on spiritual jazz.

JOHN MULVEY



THE NECKS
Vertigo
RER MEGACORPS/ NORTHERN SPY

Fraught 18th album from Australia's radical jazz trio

7/10

Some 25 years into their career, The Necks have become one of the most critically revered bands on the planet, renowned for their epic live improvs and a back catalogue that exists in a rarefied interzone between jazz and ambient. *Open* (2013), at once serene and compelling, provided a useful entry point for newcomers to The Necks' music. *Vertigo* is a hairier experience, in which the band's trademark grid of recurring phrases and silences are augmented by ominous drones and some explosive percussive disruptions. As ever, the single 44-minute track is immersive; those coming to The Necks for a transcendent mindfulness session, however, may find it distinctly unnerving in places.

JOHN MULVEY



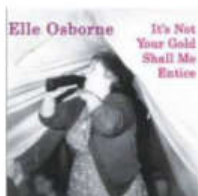
NEON INDIAN
VEGA INTL. Night School
TRANSGRESSIVE

Chillwave scenester's warped'n'groovy funkified double
For his third album,

Texan Alan Palomo has revived his dance-pop alias VEGA and swapped chillwave for yacht rock – fitting, perhaps, because its songs came together on a cruise ship where his brother was playing in the house band. *Night School* gives his hazy, heavily treated hypnagogic pop an '80s electro-funk refit, leaning mostly on Prince but mixing in Italo disco and the blue-eyed soul of Wham! and Hall & Oates. The results are alluringly warped – top marks for “61 Cygni Ave”, which suggests Duran Duran in a Turkish nightclub – but this groovy nostalgia is now a well-trodden path.

SHARON O'CONNELL

6/10



ELLE OSBORNE
It's Not Your Gold Shall Me Entice
9TH ESTATE

Stunning fourth outing from folkly talent
Lincolnshire songwriter

Elle Osborne's skill lies in straddling a contemporary folk vernacular that reaches back into Northern Britain's musical and folkloric traditions. Rather than become suffocated by tradition, Osborne seems liberated and unconstrained as she spoils evocative stories that celebrate the point where landscape meets humanity: like “Salt”, a wonderful shanty, the gentle storm of “Undone”, or the excellent, up-tempo “And Everything”. Osborne also has a rich humour – see “I Don't Like Sundays” – that ensures the Northern Gothic sensibility doesn't get too draining.

PETER WATTS

7/10



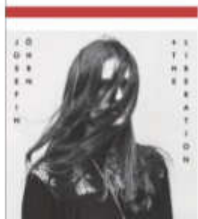
MONK PARKER
How The Spark Loves The Tinder
BRONZE RAT

Former Low Lows and Parker & Lily frontman devotes himself to misery

One has to assume that Austin's Monk Parker took the break-up of his previous band, The Low Lows, pretty hard. His debut solo release is arguably even more lugubrious than they ever managed; his pleasantly nasal, Jim-James-meets-Kurt-Wagner vocals shadowed by solemn brass arrangements and theremin, as though a veteran country singer were receiving a spooky New Orleans funeral. Fortunately, “Sadly Yes” also boasts the warm, lazy arpeggios of Josh Haden's Spain, and, on “Wanna Be Forgotten”, he explores similarly heartfelt, upbeat soul territory to Matthew E White.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

7/10



JOSEFIN ÖHRN + THE LIBERATION
Horse Dance
ROCKET

Mesmerising debut by Stockholm psych unit with a flair for motorik grooves and creepy pop grandeur

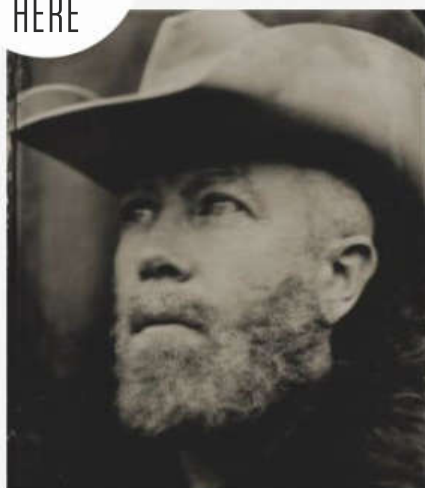
Like their fellow Swedes and former tourmates Goat, Öhrn and The Liberation excel at melding together a seemingly incongruous set of inspirations. The sound of Öhrn's wispy voice hovering over the motorik grooves of “Dunes” and “Take Me Beyond” will enthrall anyone who ever wished Françoise Hardy took a side gig fronting Neu!. A marvel of mounting intensity, *Horse Dance*'s title track is equally suggestive of Broadcast's eerie avant-pop and the thuggish biker-psych of The Black Angels. But as with so many of their Swedish cohorts, there's a keenly melodic sensibility at the core of Öhrn's head music, even at its most turbulent.

JASON ANDERSON

8/10

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Monk Parker



➤ “Honestly, it feels like everything else I've done was part of the training montage for this solo work,” laughs Monk Parker of his first album under his own name. “I believe in my work now in a way I didn't before, so I'm willing to sign it honestly for the first time. I'm a late bloomer, apparently!” Having previously worked under the guise of Parker & Lily (“a sparse, lo-fi dreampop duo with '60s soundtrack overtones, mostly just me and my then-girlfriend Lily Wolf”) and The Low Lows (“more of a downer-Americana trio, a post-Neil-Young thing with lots of feedback and druggy drones”), he broke up the latter after developing “a mysterious thyroid imbalance and hormone shift that stripped away my will, drive and focus”. Moving to Athens, Georgia, and now working alone, Parker amassed hundreds of hours of unfinished songs over the three years it took to recover, finally setting up in Matt Verta-Ray (Heavy Trash)'s studio in New York to complete the first batch, before adding the album's distinctive string and horn brass arrangements at his parent's home outside Austin, Texas. He is, he says, now on a roll. “We're mixing the second record in October. The third one's already recorded as well!” WYNDHAM WALLACE



PURE BATHING CULTURE
Pray For Rain
MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Dreampop duo switch on the synths
Pure Bathing Culture's 2013 debut album, *Moon Tides*, was a

slow-burning beauty that managed to beat Beach House at their own game. This follow-up adopts a number of more obvious pop techniques – synths, clap-tracks, vocals high in the mix – resulting in an album that's more direct, but not necessarily more distinct. Instead, Pure Bathing House have become another of those bands offering a post-ironic take on Cyndi Lauper's candied '80s pop, although *Pray For Rain*'s terrific title track is the equal of anything Chvrches have produced. It's the slowies that suffer – lacking the warm glaze of the previous album, they can sound a little hollow.

SAM RICHARDS

6/10



ONEOHTRIX POINT NEVER
Garden Of Delete
WARP

US synth maestro's ostentatious gibberish
The past few years have seen Daniel Lopatin

score Hollywood movies, soundtrack art installations and tour with Nine Inch Nails and Soundgarden, so it's little wonder he unspools his more lurid fantasies on these audacious Oneohtrix Point Never albums. Aimed, he says, at the guys in the mall, his eighth, *Garden Of Delete*, toys with rock convention – “Sticky Drama”, “Lift” and “SDFK” feature snippets of digital shredding and sentimental balladry – but ultimately dissolves into a beautifully arranged and slightly sickly morass of curdled pop tropes, out of which spurt a bodacious riff or glossy rave arpeggio. Oddly, no-one does this better.

PIERS MARTIN

8/10



RABBIT
Communion
TRI ANGLE

Eerie avant-grime, all the way from Lone Star State
Rabbit, real name Eric Burton, hails from Houston, Texas, but is very much an internationalist,

with ties to the underground Berlin club scene, London grime experimentalists such as Logos and Mumdance, and Björk's favourite label, Tri Angle, which releases this, his debut LP. “Snow Leopard” and “Pandemic” Hoover influence from all of the above, creating a crunchy, industrial grime that's comparable to Dizzee Rascal's “I Luv U”, but weirder. There is space for some lovely, spectral melodies – see particularly the twinkling “Glass Harp Interlude” – while “Flesh Covers The Bone” and “Trapped In This Body” introduce notes of unsettling Cronenberg horror to the brew. Can feel somewhat alienating, but worth sticking with.

LOUIS PATTISON

7/10

NADIA REID

Listen To Formation, Look For The Signs

SPUNK!

Young Kiwi's knockout, country-folk first. *By Sharon O'Connell*



8/10

TO MAKE AN issue of an artist's age when assessing their work is questionable wherever on life's timeline they happen to be – not least of all because it's no more useful a creative indicator than eye colour. But in Nadia Reid's case, it's unavoidable. The

understated, alt.country-folk eloquence of this New Zealander's debut, its deep, measured emotion and the seasoned richness of her voice are impressive, but even more so, given the fact that she's 24.

The Auckland-born Reid "stumbled into music" aged 14, made her first public appearance at a small folk festival when she was 15 and soon began playing at regular open-mic nights in Dunedin, chaperoned by her mother. She took weekly guitar lessons with Robert Scott, of Flying Nun standard-bearers The Clean and The Bats and, via a movie soundtrack, discovered The Be Good Tanyas, who she fell for in a big way. It was during a listening session with her friend Aldous Harding (whose terrific debut album was released last year, also on Spunk! Records) that Reid was told for the first time that she had a good voice, and should pursue her songwriting.

Listen To Formation... follows her 2011 EP, "Letters I Wrote And Never Sent", and has taken seven years to arrive. But despite the fact that she was a teen when she wrote some of these songs, it's a profoundly reflective and – no other word will do – mature electro-acoustic set. Heartbreak and recovery feature, as on "Ruby", a deceptively beautiful song with betrayal at its core, and the sweetly philosophical "Track Of The Time", but relationships of all stripes figure, as do issues of home and belonging. Now based in Port Chalmers, Reid has lived in all four main NZ cities. "I don't want to stay in one place for too long," she says. "I like feeling uncomfortable. That's where all the good songs are written." Hence the strong sense of place in her lonesome ballads, which evoke local landscapes without actually describing them.

The likes of "Track Of The Time", "Holy Low" and "Some Are Lucky" share the melancholic spirit of Gillian Welch and Dave Rawlings, Jolie Holland and Sharon Van Etten, rather than borrowing their style. Yet they're in no way miserable and, alongside Reid's vivid poeticism ("I threw out my winter coat/ I cut the sleeves off all I'd known" – from "Call The Days"), there are sly surprises. "If I am bound for something, I will always take the shortest fucking road," she declares on "Reaching Through", a glassy, driving pop number that suggests Jenny Lewis fronting Blondie and is the record's wild card.

An empathetic band with jazz chops fills out these songs without overinflating them, lending drama via twanging guitar lines bent around the vocals, shudders of double bass and sometimes just the clicking of drumsticks to mark a beat. The



SLEEVE NOTES

Produced by:

Ben Edwards

Recorded at:

The Sitting Room, Lyttelton, New Zealand

Personnel: Nadia Reid

(vocals, guitar), Sam

Taylor (guitar), Richie

Pickard (bass), Joe

McCallum (drums),

Anita Clark (violin)

centrepiece is Reid's voice. Clean and luminescent, it's also supple, with a kind of sad grace that belies its strength. There are echoes of Low's Mimi Parker and a more robust Hope Sandoval and, although some might tag Reid "the Antipodean Laura Marling" solely on the evidence of "Call The Days", she's no more that than she is Chris Isaak, whose bluesy swoop she borrows for "Some Are Lucky". Like Marling, though, Reid respects restraint and she reveals herself in a mix of autobiography (notably "Holy Low", where she remembers characters she grew up with) and allusion ("Seasons Change"). "I keep the art separate from the love," she sings on

"Reaching Through" – a reminder that the self and its expression aren't always exactly aligned.

Since many of the songs on *Listen To Formation...* are old in Reid's mind, it's no surprise that a second album, also produced by Ben Edwards, is now in

the pipeline. And although it's reckless to declare anything a "scene" from a (very long) distance, talented artists such as Aldous Harding, Delaney Davidson, Ivy Rossiter and Marlon Williams represent a fresh, country-folk/Americana movement in and around Christchurch and Dunedin. Nadia Reid's impeccable debut will maybe set a wider orbit in motion.

Q&A

Nadia Reid

Was country-folk music your first love? I like music that I can connect with lyrically, spiritually and aesthetically – and if it moves me, then I like it regardless of its genre. More often than not, that music is folk-driven, as folk music is raw, honest storytelling. That's what I like.

Did you always know making music was your "path"? No. And I still don't. Some days, when things align, I can feel proud and that this is my "purpose", but some days it's like, "This sucks. Too much of a rollercoaster for my emotional state; time to get a real job." But actually, I think I'll be writing and singing for the rest of my life.

What do you think it is that draws you to the deeply melancholic? When I write, I'm writing for myself, to the very core. And I write most when I'm sad or reflecting, or going through something hard or weird, and the songs are my attempt to make sense or purge. When I think of my favourite songs, they are absolutely, heart-wrenchingly, devastatingly sad. Sad songs make me happy.

What was your aim with the track, "Reaching Through"? There wasn't really an aim. I don't write a lot of songs that have that pop factor, but sometimes they just slip out of nowhere. It was written in a hurricane time of my life – things were changing, for the good, [there was] a lot of unknowingness. I think I was sick of singing slow, sad songs.

INTERVIEW: SHARON O'CONNELL



**RATS ON
RAFTS**
Tape Hiss
FIRE

Guitar fuzz with a weird underbelly
Tape Hiss is the slow-working Dutch psych-punks' second album

7/10

in 10 years, during which time they've cultivated their knack for knocking senses out of shape. Songs are largely centred on shrill, surfy guitar and all of them are built to be absorbed, affixed to undulating rhythms that ebb and flow before they eventually slip into a groove. "Sleep Little Child", "Machine 1-6-8" and "Last Day On Earth" are archetypal, stretching various movements over several disorientating minutes, while "Rat Poison Face" takes a more straightforward approach to strangeness, socking you in the face with a weird racket like Thee Oh Sees at their most mocking and malevolent.

PETER WATTS



**REVEREND
AND THE
MAKERS**
Mirrors
COOKING VINYL

Kaleidoscopic psych-rock gospel on Sheffield institution's fifth album

7/10

Mirrors sees Sheffield bigmouth Jon McClure make good on the ambition of past boasts. With wife and co-vocalist Laura a fully integrated Maker, personal concerns ("Makin' Babies") are prominent, but the ambitions are more widescreen. Sequenced like a good mixtape, the songs, conjoined with riffs knowingly referencing The Jam, Dexys Midnight Runners, Happy Mondays and more, mine upbeat exhilaration, pastoral reflection and, on "Something To Remember", Richard Hawley's string-laden grandeur. At times, it's redolent in scope of Paul Weller's *21 Dreams*.

GAVIN MARTIN



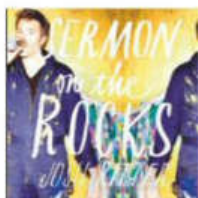
**REVOLUTIONARY
ARMY OF THE
INFANT JESUS**
**Beauty Will Save
The World**
OCCULTATION

The cultured, enigmatic troupe break vow of silence

9/10

Formed in Liverpool in 1985 and named after a fictional terrorist group in Luis Buñuel's swansong, *That Obscure Object Of Desire*, RAIJ released two remarkable albums and two EPs (collected on 2013's *After The End*) before spending 18 years in the wilderness. On their return, the core trio remains, continuing to draw inspiration from disparate sources. It's an alluringly strange brew that suggests Nico's *The Marble Index* and John Tavener's sparse, later works, but with the purity of Shirley and Dolly Collins' *Anthems Of Eden*; held together by tribal percussion, persuasive refrains and meditative voices.

MICK HOUGHTON



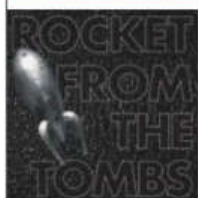
JOSH RITTER
**Sermon On
The Rocks**
PYTHEAS/THIRTY
TIGERS

Idaho singer-songwriter playfully locates his inner Moses

8/10

Josh Ritter describes his eighth album as "messianic oracular honky-tonk". Certainly, compared with the pained introspection of 2013's *The Beast In Its Tracks*, *Sermon On The Rocks* is a wild ride, with producer Trina Shoemaker adding vivid colours to the singer's rolling rock gospel. If the imagery is Biblical, the mood is playful. "Young Moses" is a Dylanesque ramble, "Where The Night Goes" employs Springsteen poetics for a ride through the darkness. Ultimately, it's about redemption, as found in the gorgeous "Homecoming" and the sunset serenade "My Man On A Horse (Is Here)".

ALASTAIR MCKAY



**ROCKET
FROM THE
TOMBS**
Black Record
FIRE

Undead boys: prehistoric Pere Ubu re-activated
Cleveland art-rock's

7/10

lost patrol, Rocket From The Tombs featured bits of Pere Ubu and the Dead Boys during their initial 1974-'75 incarnation. Revived since 2003, they're pleasingly bleak on their second studio set; Dylan meets The Stooges on end-of-days opener "Waiting For The Snow", while Aussie punks Radio Birdman hover above "Welcome To The New Dark Ages". David Thomas' wheezy re-run of early-RFTT original "Sonic Reducer", meanwhile, ratchets up the poignancy, the line about "I don't need anyone, I don't need no mom and dad" that little bit more acute coming from a man of 62.

JIM WIRTH



LISA RONSON
**Emperors
Of Medieval
Japan**
MANIC SQUAT

Inventive solo debut from Mick Ronson's girl and ex-Secret History singer

6/10

Fresh from a stint with Tony Visconti's Bowie tribute band, Ronson has rounded up other Thin White Duke acolytes (including guitarists Reeves Gabrels and Earl Slick) on a set that she describes as "post-synthetic". Combining synth-pop influences and alt.rock tropes, she channels Depeche Mode on the title track, while the riffing of "Get To You" evokes her dad at his best. There's also a clever, almost Devo-worthy cover of "Shaking All Over", and her own sprechgesang lyrics on tracks such as "Shopping And Fucking" and "CKSB" are full of dark humour and troubling images.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



ROOTS MANUVA
Bleeds
BIG DADA

Salvation and suburban living as London MC flees to home counties

8/10

Rodney Smith remains the pre-eminent British rapper, not just for his longevity but for the colloquial Englishness of his vision. "Hard Bastards", the opener of his sixth album, promises "*hard bars from the hard-arse bastards*", going on to wring its hands over a society grown fat on junk food and low horizons. Like 2008's *Slime & Reason*, *Bleeds* can come on a bit like an episode of 'Grumpy Old MCs'. But there's always room for salvation in Smith's world – he contemplates God's love and croons along to a sampled Barry White on the honeyed disco-soul of "Don't Breathe Out", while the popping dancehall of "One Thing" finds him considering his new life in leafy Surrey.

LOUIS PATTISON



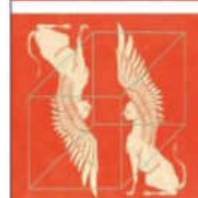
BILL RYDER-JONES
**West Kirby
County Primary**
DOMINO

Birken-head music: Wirral wonder comforts inner child

8/10

"*Fortune favours everybody but me*," sighs Bill Ryder-Jones on "Wild Roses", but while the fragile former Coral guitarist carries the weight of several worlds on his shoulders, his invigoratingly noisy third album is anything but morose. Named after his first school, and partly recorded at his mum's house, *West Kirby County Primary* hints at a painful past, but – like Euros Childs, Nick Drake or Michael Head – Ryder-Jones excels at finding redeeming beauty in forbidding places. Sunlight dapples family tragedy on "Daniel", while the cold-blooded old times of "Catharine And Huskisson" are accorded a stately magnificence. No small talent, this one.

JIM WIRTH



SAINTSENECA
Such Things
ANTI-

Strong indie-folk offering from Ohio
Saintseneca's fifth album follows up the promise of 2014's *Dark Arc* with a

8/10

series of fine, verbose songs that are full of ideas and diverse sounds. While extraordinarily busy, they rarely fail to engage. The creation of Zac Little, the band moves comfortably between genres, but some of their finest moments remain couched in an indie-folk tradition, such as the excellent, Appalachian gospel of "Bad Ideas", the wicked Cajun swing/drone of "Maya 31" and the gorgeous campfire howl of "How Many Blankets". Interesting diversions include the pell-mell rhythms of "Necker Cube" and the delicious dub-rocker "Lazarus", the latter strangely reminiscent of Radiohead.

PETER WATTS



NITIN SAWHNEY

Dystopian Dream

POSITIV-ID

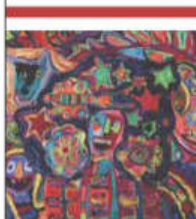
Ninth album from ambitious polymath

From spearheading the Asian underground to film and television

8/10

scores, compositions for ballet and theatre and stints as a sketch writer and TV presenter, Sawhney's reputation as a 21st-century Renaissance man has prompted suggestions that he spreads his talents too thin, like a musical Stephen Fry. But *Dystopian Dream* epitomises what Sawhney does best – writing culturally eclectic and atmospheric songs and inviting a smartly selected array of singers to give voice to his socially conscious lyrics. Here they include Joss Stone, the rapper Akala and Natacha Atlas on a bluesy trip-hop set that evokes Massive Attack and Tricky at their creative peak.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



THE SHIFTING SANDS

Cosmic Radio Station

OCCULTATION

Multi-faceted guitar pop channelling New Zealand's '80s Flying Nun sound

8/10

Dunedin trio The Shifting Sands evolved from the solo project of Michael McLeod, and their resulting debut, *Feel*, featured local A-listers from such groups as The Verlaines and The Clean. On the follow-up, they develop their brand of floaty, shoegazing guitar pop underpinned by synth samples and gorgeous overdubbed violin. By no means one-dimensional, they drift seamlessly from the pulsing pop of "Waiting For The Sun", with its distinct echoes of the Mary Chain, to the aching, Big Star-like "We All Fall Down", while "Dreaming To Keep Awake" remodels Sonic Youth's dissonant wall of guitars as pure pop.

MICK HOUGHTON



SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE

Early Risers

MEXICAN SUMMER

Conceptual "anti-band" supergroup reunite for heavy-rocking wonder

9/10

Soldiers Of Fortune describe themselves as an "anti-band", formed in 2004 by members of Oneida, Zwan, Interpol and Endless Boogie with a view to playing one show a year without rehearsing or recording. An LP did come out in 2011 and *Early Risers* is the belated follow-up, a fizzingly good affair of dumb-ass heavy rock ("Nails"), West Coast boogie ("Cinnamon Man") and indie drawl ("Campus Swagger") – and that's just the first three songs. Joining the fun are pals such as Ethan Miller, Stephen Malkmus and Cass McCombs, who add to the sense of chaos, but do not diminish the cohesion that make these diverse jams so stupidly, thrillingly rewarding.

PETER WATTS



THE SPOOK SCHOOL

Try To Be Hopeful

FORTUNA POP!

Scots quartet mix queer theory with fizzing indie-pop love songs

6/10

The second album from Edinburgh queer-punks

The Spook School brings into sharper focus the issues of gender and sexual identity that bubbled through their fine 2013 debut, *Dress Up*. Recorded as transgender guitarist and vocalist Nye Todd was beginning testosterone therapy, which affected his singing voice, *Try To Be Hopeful* offers a defiantly romantic challenge to constructed gender norms on "Burn Masculinity" and "Binary", the first lyric built around the splendid word "hexadecimal". Mostly excellent stuff, though the quartet's reliance on a shambling C86 sound is an oddly conservative aesthetic given their progressive stance on sexual and political matters.

STEPHEN DALTON

WE'RE
NEW
HERE

Soldiers Of Fortune



► Brad Truax, later of Interpol and Howlin Rain, dreamt up NYC indie supergroup Soldiers Of Fortune when he was "coming off some pretty heavy shit" in detox in 2004. "In my fucked state I had a hallucination of seeing an old *Soldier Of Fortune* magazine on the table in the day room," he explains. "This thought came to me that if I ever got out, I would start a project of misfit musicians like a *Dirty Dozen* cracked outfit consisting of the best musicians (according to me) in New York," he says. "A band that would not have any rules or preconceived notions of what it should be or sound like."

Initially intending to play one unrehearsed show a year, the band has released a second album, *Early Risers*, a wicked stew of riffs and jams "recorded live in two days... we hit 'record' and just GO. We rely purely on, instinct, intuition, chemistry, improvisation, and stupidity in the moment."

Main contributors were Truax, Jesper Eklow from Endless Boogie, as well as Mike Bones and Matt Sweeney, but with guest spots from Ethan Miller, "one of the best rock singers out there", and Stephen Malkmus, who "played some of the best hungover guitar I've ever seen anyone play." What's next? "We're working on some UK shows for next year," says Truax. "Hopefully, there will be 10 more albums in the next five years. Who knows? We all could be dead tomorrow."

PETER WATTS



ROD STEWART

Another Country

CAPITOL

Bagpipes, reggae, Winston Churchill: Rod's latest has them all

Understandably keen to repeat the success of 2013's *Time* – his first No 1 album

7/10

in 34 years – *Another Country* largely continues the same unashamedly nostalgic tone. There's a syrupy tribute to wife Penny Lancaster ("Can We Stay Home Tonight?") and young sons ("Batman Superman Spiderman"). "Another Country" features bagpipes. "Love And Be Loved" is an unwise excursion into reggae. On safer ground, "The Drinking Song" finds Rod reminiscing about finding his trousers in a tree. "Way Back Home", meanwhile, is a rousing piece of *Daily Mail* puff, where Rod celebrates the "pride and faultless grace" with which the British public endured the privations of World War II – it closes with a sample of Winston Churchill.

MICHAEL BONNER



KELLEY STOLTZ

In Triangle Time

CASTLE FACE

SF garage-pop auteur heads into an alternative '80s

At this point, the back catalogue of Kelley Stoltz is so comically undervalued,

8/10

it feels like something of a conceptual joke, designed for him to be rediscovered as a Great Lost Genius in 30 years' time. This latest album beautifully augments the myth, mostly forsaking Stoltz' artisanal vintage freakbeat for equally catchy, new-wave crypto-hits. He's been in this territory before, covering the Bunnymen's *Crocodiles* (2001), but never with such verve. Bowie, The Fall and the Teardrops get sly nods, in a set that seems primed for the Futurama Festival circa 1982. Fans of Stoltz' more psychedelic work should also note the "Odds & Sods" offcuts EP, and a further LP, *The Scuzzy Inputs Of Willie Weird*, released simultaneously.

JOHN MULVEY



TEETH OF THE SEA

Highly Deadly Black Tarantula

ROCKET

Julian Cope-approved quartet's compelling fourth outing

7/10

TOTS have made dread and awe their signature across three albums, shifting the balance between abrasive noise and transcendent beauty while always impressing. Their latest dismantles the genre boundaries often used to pen them in, exploring definitions of the sublime from Angelo Badalamenti and early Floyd to Raime and Ulver. Minimalism is their sharpest weapon, as the sawing rhythm that fills four ominous minutes of "Have You Ever Held A Bird Of Prey" shows. In contrast, the poignant "Love Theme For 1984" is like a curtain swept back to reveal the cosmos in all its glittering, limitless glory.

SHARON O'CONNELL

GUY GARVEY

Courting The Squall

POLYDOR

Elbow man indulges his eclectic tastes on self-effacing solo debut.

By Fiona Sturges



8/10

IT'S A QUARTER of a century since five friends from Bury formed a band called Elbow. Since then – and unusually for a group with such longevity – there have been no bust-ups or walkouts, no discernible aggro beyond, possibly,

who should get the next round in. Instead they have presented an unbesmirched picture of northern grafters whose slow path to glory has been navigated with grace and equanimity.

At the centre of it all is Guy Garvey, a lugubrious yet sweetly affable frontman who hardly passes for a pop star, but has nevertheless risen to become something of a national treasure. A contributing factor is his BBC 6 Music radio show, where his love for his job seeps from the speakers, and during which he touchingly introduces himself as “Guy Garvey, the lead singer from Elbow”, just in case any listeners are still struggling to place him.

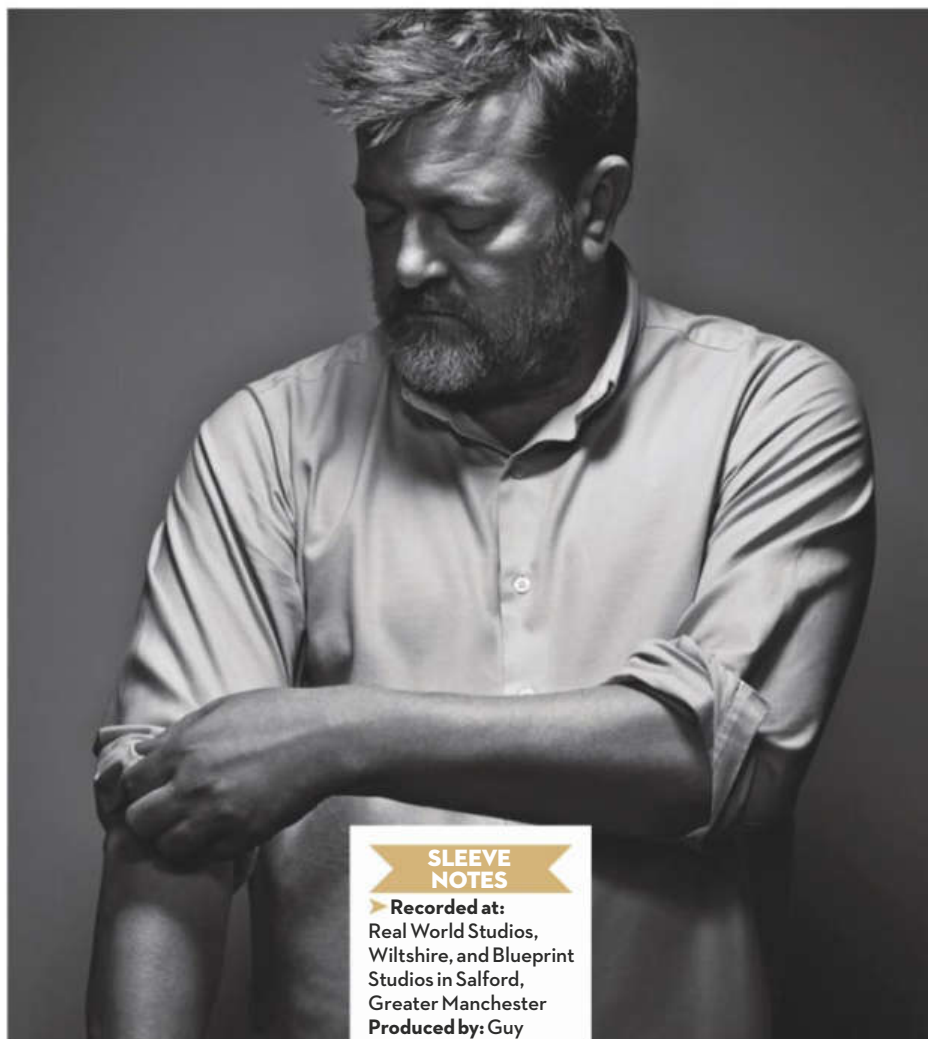
It's with similar self-deprecation that he has described his first solo effort as “a vanity project”, a self-conscious nod to the many ego-fluffing excursions of frontmen past. *Courting The Squall* is, he says, the result of a long-held desire to temporarily shake off the constraints (and conflicting opinions) of a five-piece band. It's an experiment to see how he fares on his own.

That is not to say that Garvey has fallen out of love with Elbow, or that he has temporarily lost his mind and indulged a lifelong yearning to make an album of Tuvan throat-singing. This solo work is still recognisably his, yet it is leaner, more intimate and a little rough around the edges.

While his way with a melody is as keen as ever, this isn't about the rousing tunes or ticker-tape moments. There are no massed voices or orchestras for added emotional sway. If Garvey has an audience in mind, it's not the vast crowds to which he has become accustomed but small gatherings in backrooms and basement dives. Where he exhorted us to “throw those curtains wide” in Elbow's masterpiece, “One Day Like This”, here he seems to be inviting us to draw them shut, pull up a chair and pour ourselves a glass of wine.

It's no surprise to discover that the album was recorded swiftly and with minimal overdubs; the whole project has a deliberately unstudied and, at times, semi-improvised atmosphere. Illustrative of the looser vibe is the opener, “Angela's Eyes”, apparently informed by his burgeoning interest in Afrobeat. It begins with shuffling drums and twanging, atonal stabs of guitar over which Garvey reflects, in unvarnished voice, on his attempts at self-examination (“I've been looking for my truth since God was a boy”).

Indeed, there's an eclecticism here that you'd struggle to find on an Elbow record. “Electricity” is a smoky, sensuous homage to '30s New York jazz,



SLEEVE NOTES

Recorded at: Real World Studios, Wiltshire, and Blueprint Studios in Salford, Greater Manchester

Produced by: Guy Garvey and Danny Evans

Personnel: Pete Jobson (lead guitar), Nathan Sudders (bass), Ben Christophers (keyboards), Alex Reeves (drums), Rachael Gladwin (harp)

with guest vocals from Jolie Holland. Here you sense a man joyfully dabbling in alternative eras and genres without ever straying from the sweet melancholia at which he has become so adept.

On “Juggernaut”, Garvey slips back into older, more familiar territory, homing in on the humdrum (“cursed in the folly of a three-dollar broly”) while dispensing bruised wisdoms. There's an Elbow-esque quality, too, in the piano arrangement of “Yesterday”, which has shades of a John Barry film soundtrack, and which suffuses the song with a melodrama that is mostly absent elsewhere.

Lyrically, as ever, Garvey's skill lies in combining romantic poeticism with sandpaper wit. In the title track, against gentle washes of harp, he bemoans the distance, both physically and emotionally, from a partner: “You're out with a friend in the capital, I'm a thousand leagues under the sea/ You're hovering worriedly over your eggs and I'm pondering trees.”

This sense of a man out of step with the world is, of course, a recurring theme for Garvey. Going solo may be a new dawn for a singer looking to try something new but, in his case, there's no getting away from himself.

Q&A

Guy Garvey

How scary was it to be making an album without the security blanket of a band?

The lads' opinions were always in my mind, but there are many areas where Elbow's tastes don't meet. So it was exciting to try new things and, in the end, I didn't consider the record finished until they had all heard it and loved it. Five songwriters working together means each decision is pored over, which is what makes Elbow's music so intricate, often challenging and ultimately very grand. This record was made quickly and impulsively and it feels a bit more from the hip as a result. Vanity project is precisely the right phrase.

Could you throw some light on the album's title?

In the context of the song it is taken from, it's a gentle way of telling a friend that their reckless social pursuits are bordering on self-harm. It means prodding the bear, gently inviting danger. As an album title, it means going solo was pretty nerve-racking. Elbow's music has always been very well received and I didn't know if I was capable of a making a good album on my own.

To what extent were you trying to make a record that didn't sound like an Elbow record?

One of the first compliments I had on the record was from Tim Young, who mastered it. He has mastered Elbow records for years, so he is a reliable benchmark. He said, “I like this album Guy, it doesn't sound like Elbow, but not self-consciously so.” That's exactly the tightrope I was trying to walk. *INTERVIEW: FIONA STURGES*



TUXEDOMOON & CULT WITH NO NAME

Blue Velvet Revisited

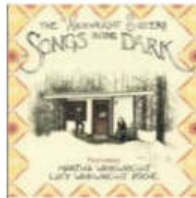
CRAMMED DISCS

7/10

Serene soundtrack to upcoming Lynch documentary

In 1985, David Lynch invited German director Peter Braatz to document the making of his latest movie, *Blue Velvet*. Thirty years later, *Blue Velvet Revisited* is still in the editing room, but in the meantime Braatz asked London duo Cult With No Name to conjure a suitably evocative score to his candid Super-8 footage of the cast and crew. Together with veteran new-wavers Tuxedomoon they've composed a drowsy late-night blues smeared with curdled brass, best realised on "So Fucking Suave" and "Do It For Van Gogh". Not bad, but not Badalamenti.

PIERS MARTIN



THE WAINWRIGHT SISTERS

Songs In The Dark

PIAS

7/10

Another folk dynasty spin-off

Martha Wainwright and Lucy Wainwright Roche share a father, Loudon Wainwright, but different mothers, Kate McGarrigle and Suzzy Roche, and these songs shaped their childhood although they didn't grow up together. Lucy covers Dad's "Screaming Issue" about his inability to calm her infant bawling, but the most compelling songs are the sinister "It Runs In The Family" from the Roches' debut, and family friend Richard Thompson's forbidding "End Of The Rainbow". Disappointingly, there's a lack of biting vocal interaction between the half-sisters, nothing to match the delectable harmonies that graced the McGarrigles or less fêted Roches.

MICK HOUGHTON



WRECKLESS ERIC

amERICA

FIRE

8/10

Goulden States: Stiff primitive goes west

Blessed (or perhaps cursed) with a voice that sounds like lager cans opening in front of episodes of *Homes Under The Hammer*, Eric Goulden's descent from Cliff Richard-approved Stiff Records fun-bundle to angry loner reached a bleak conclusion with 2004's *Bungalow Hi*. *amERICA*, however, finds Wreckless Eric reborn in the USA, his home since 2011. Curmudgeonly, maybe, but a sly joy pervades the Velvets undergrowth around "Boy Band" and "Space Age", while "Several Shades Of Green" is career-defining in more ways than one. "I was nearly someone back in the day," the "Whole Wide World"-hitmaker rasps, smiling somewhere deep inside.

JIM WIRTH



ANNA VON HAUSSWOLFF

The Miraculous

CITY SLANG

8/10

Majestic, gothic third album from Swedish composer

For her third LP, von Hausswolff decamped to Piteå's concert hall to record on one of Scandinavia's largest pipe organs. The result is vast and apocalyptic: "Evocation" has the scorched-earth grandeur of Swans, while "Come Wander With Me" evokes Mogwai's earliest, nastiest incarnation, and "En Ensam Vandrare" their more twinkling moments. She never swamps the organ's natural respiratory qualities – the agile undulations of "The Hope Only Of Empty Men" recall the way that Colin Stetson's sax feels like an extension of his body – and her powerful voice stands front and centre – rare for compositions this monolithic.

LAURA SNAPES

REVELATIONS

How Anna von Hausswolff fell in love with a pipe organ



➤ *The Miraculous*, Anna von Hausswolff's fourth album, documents a profound love affair. "I fell in love with the pipe organ the first time I played it in 2012," says the 28-year-old Swedish musician. "Once I sat down and started playing, I knew that this was going to be a longterm relationship."

Following 2013's *Ceremony*, which dabbled with the instrument, von Hausswolff knew her next record would be constructed around it. She headed to Piteå to record on the Studio Acusticum concert hall's unique pipe organ. The result is doomy and euphoric – testament to von Hausswolff's increased fluency on the organ. The album is named for a magical place that von Hausswolff's parents told her about when she was young, where traditional folk music came from a land that had once slaughtered its peasants, though she's keeping the location secret. "The lyrics are fragmented and abstract, not like storytelling. The lyrics are always very important to me, but I don't want them to dominate the landscape too much."

Earlier in her career, von Hausswolff said that she couldn't stand being misunderstood. Now she's changed her tune. "Sometimes it's good to be misinterpreted in order to understand your surroundings better and learn from them. I aspire to be misunderstood rather than to inspire nothing at all."

LAURA SNAPES



THE YAWPERS

American Man

BLOODSHOT

8/10

Denver roots/noise auteurs' tumultuous coming-out party

In timeless rock'n'roll spirit, a restless, barely-hanging-on-the-rails quality drives this young Colorado trio's aggressive sound. They're adept at wispy country/blues ballads, too – see "Burdens", where singer Nate Cook channels a bit of both Peter Case and Jay Farrar – while a subtle political commentary inheres, as in the ugly, stupid American character portrayed in the title track. But it's when they seemingly reach straight down the devil's throat, as on the ferocious "Deacon Brodie", a strangled punk/blues bottleneck, that this debut really distinguishes itself.

LUKE TORN



W-X

W-X

CASTLE FACE

6/10

So-so experimental electronica from West Coast garage rocker supreme

The prolific Tim Presley (White Fence) recently recorded a chaotic post-punk album with Cate Le Bon, and here serves up an electronica-infused musical collage side-project. Using conventional instruments, samples, white noise and every weird or disorientating sound he can muster, this double album is a very curious affair, with tracks like "Steer Clear" descending from straightforward rock into grey whirls of white noise. Meanwhile, "Two Peaceful Death Birds" constantly hovers on the brink of breaking into a recognisable melody. It's also strangely relaxing, with tracks such as "Extortion" and "Sacri-Face" conjuring a woozy, chilled-out vibe.

PETER WATTS



YOUNGHUSBAND

Dissolver

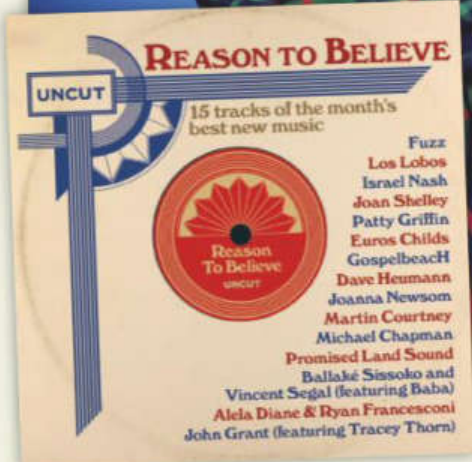
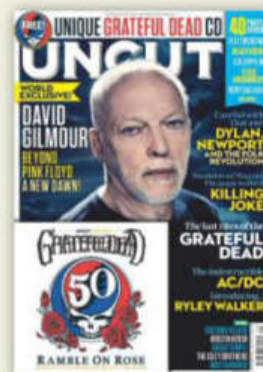
ATP

6/10

London quartet loses its bearings in deep shadows of the past on morose second

YoungHusband's veneration of *Third* is filtered through the Big Star obsession of '90s forebears like Teenage Fanclub, putting it at a double remove from the genuine angst of the source material. Too often, frontman Euan Hinshelwood's strivings for tragedy come off as merely morose, his lead vocals doubled in the Elliott Smith manner as the backing harmonies cut through the existential gloom like shafts of sunlight. The prevailing downbeat vibe renders particularly welcome bursts of energy on the jangly "Waverly Street", the pummelling "Blonde Blending" and the Kinks-like "Better Times". Somewhat inevitably, the Velvets' third album haunts the closing title song.

BUD SCOPPA



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REISSUES | COMPS | BOXSETS | LOST RECORDINGS



BOB DYLAN

The Cutting Edge 1965-1966: The Bootleg Series Vol 12: Deluxe Edition COLUMBIA

No (rolling) stone left unturned: comprehensive record of Dylan's mid-'60s milestones. *By Allan Jones*

10/10 JANUARY 14, 1965. Let's imagine it's snowing, New York waking to winter's half-light. It's certainly cold. Close to freezing, in fact, when Bob Dylan rocks up to Columbia Records' Studio A at 799 Seventh

Avenue for the second day of work on *Bringing It All Back Home*, his fifth album, which he'll finish the following day.

Yesterday, Dylan recorded solo acoustic versions of songs for the album, including a new

song, "Subterranean Homesick Blues". It was good, thrilling even. But perhaps more than anything he's written to date, it screams out for the electric guitars, drums, whatever, that will turn it into something more than another of his comic talking blues. So for today's sessions, there's a band waiting for him that includes Greenwich Village pals John Hammond Jr and Bruce Langhorne on guitars, pianists Frank Owens and Paul Griffin, and former Sun Ra drummer Bobby Gregg. They nail the song in a single take and afterwards nothing is the same.

Dylan at the time is the poster boy of the folk movement, that pious beast. Its bearded elders hold him in an otherworldly esteem and fully expect him indefinitely to be the songwriter they want him to be, the voice of protest, moral accusation, railing against injustice, racism, war, the whole hullabaloo. The pious indignity they reserve for "Subterranean Homesick Blues" reaches a self-righteous pitch when it proves to be not the aberration they had hoped, but the start of a whole new musical life for their former godhead. There will be accusations, then, of betrayal.

The folk crowd could have seen this coming, of course, if they'd been paying attention. Dylan hadn't written a protest song as such since the dour prosecutions of 1963's "The Times They Are A-Changin'". He's tired of sermons and – for the moment at least – will write no more, whatever the wheedling complaints of Pete Seeger, Irwin Silber and the rest of the Sing Out crowd. His trip now is entropy. Dig? Neither was Dylan coming new to rock'n'roll. He'd been listening to Elvis Presley, Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis long before he'd even heard of Woody Guthrie. Back home in the Minnesota he'd recently fled, he'd played in high-school bands – The Shadow Blasters and The Golden Chords – and the racket he makes on the electric take of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" is plausibly reminiscent of the noise one of those early groups may have made if they'd ever essayed a version of Chuck Berry's "Too Much Monkey Business", with a new lyric inspired by beat poetry and drugs.

Released as a single, it reaches the UK Top 10, but just about makes the US Top 40. It's already changed popular music, however; that can safely be said. And it marks the start of what Dylan's best recent biographer, Ian Bell, calls "the hurricane years", although we are talking really about just 14 months, during which Dylan records *Bringing It All Back Home*, plays the solo UK tour captured in *Don't Look Back*, goes electric at the Newport Folk Festival, releases *Highway 61 Revisited*, tours America with The Hawks, causing uproar, and fetches up eventually in Nashville for *Blonde On Blonde*, rock's first double album. By the end of it all, he's amassed enough unreleased material to release a fourth album, the extra tracks instead trickling out over the years, first on 1985's *Biograph* and subsequently on the various volumes to date of The Bootleg Series, the latest of which, *The Cutting Edge 1965-1966: The Bootleg Series Vol 12*, is a breathtakingly comprehensive document of that

astonishing time. It's the sound of Dylan moving at warp speed into outer space.

All of which brings us back to Studio A, on January 13, where both the Deluxe and Collector's Edition start. Producer Tom Wilson's cueing up the first of three takes of "Love Minus Zero/No Limit". When it breaks down, Dylan's immediately impatient. He has worlds to conquer, after all. "I'll do this *one* more time," he tells Wilson. "If I can't do it, we'll do *another* song." He sounds sulky, petulant. But Wilson gets a serviceable take out of him, along with complete acoustic versions of "She Belongs To Me", "Subterranean Blues", "Outlaw Blues", "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream" and "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" (the version included here, which has previously appeared on *The Bootleg Series Vol 7*).

They're less successful with "I'll Keep It With Mine" (or "Bank Account Blues", as Dylan calls it), with Dylan on piano. He abandons it after a single wracked take, previously released on 1985's *Biograph*. The session also yields the yearning "Farewell, Angelina", soon covered by Joan Baez. Dylan's own version isn't widely heard until 1991, on *The Bootleg Series: Vol 1-3*. Also

from this session are the gruff 12-bar blues "California" [see panel], the uncompleted "You Don't Have To Do That" and a rollicking first take of "If You Gotta Go, Go Now", a recent live favourite.

The next day, Dylan returns to "Love Minus Zero". With a band behind him, it needs only two takes.

By now, Wilson's emerging

as one of the stars of the sessions. Wilson was a black Texan, a Harvard graduate, by reputation a laidback ladies' man. He'd run his own small jazz label and produced albums for Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra before hooking up with Dylan for *Freewheelin'*. He's a droll foil for Bob – patient, funny, unflappable, usually replying to Dylan's complaints in a voice as languid as any fluttering Southern belle. He indulges Dylan's various moods, but only up to a point. After the third take of "Less Than Zero", he asks the band for a partial retake to cover a mistake, provoking some confusion and backchat. The musicians turn to Bob for advice. "Hey, Bob, where're we going?" one of them asks. "I have no idea," Dylan says, laughing. "I'm just going to stand here and play the harmonica."



Dylan during the recording of *Highway 61 Revisited*

BOX OF DELIGHTS

THE CUTTING EDGE UNPACKED...

Three iterations of bootlegged Bob

The Collector's Edition of *The Cutting Edge* is a limited-edition of 5,000 available only from Dylan's website, for \$600. It runs to 379 tracks across 18 CDs, roughly the equivalent of 40 albums, that takes longer to listen to than it took Dylan to make *Bringing It All Back Home*. You also get the nine singles Dylan put out at the time. The £105 6CD Deluxe Edition has a more modest 122 tracks, but is a riot of alternative versions, outtakes, rehearsal tapes, discarded songs, scraps, rough drafts and often hilarious studio chat that comes with a 124-page hardback book with exclusive pictures and essays. There's also a 36-track 2CD, *The Best Of The Cutting Edge*, a reasonable taster at £14.



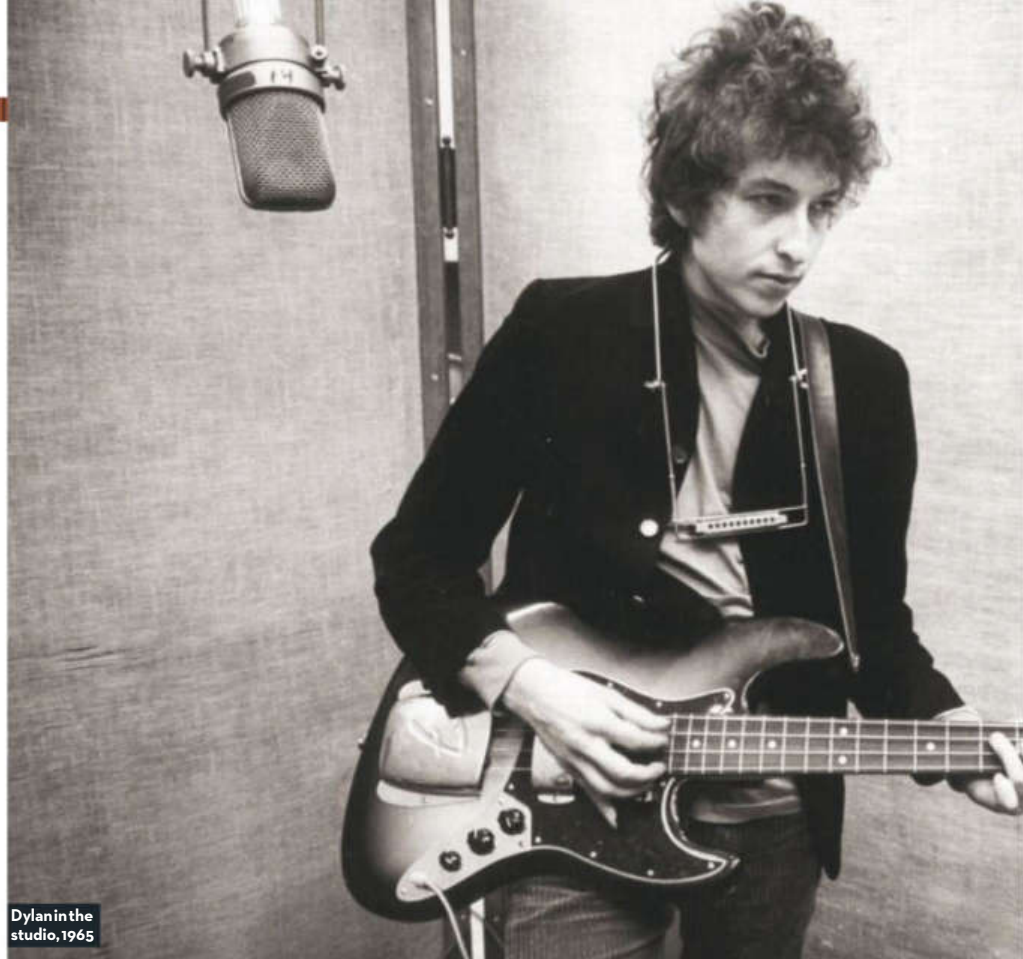
*This is astonishing
– the sound of Dylan
moving at warp
speed into
outer space*

➔ Wilson isn't in the mood for Bob's frippery and snaps. "Gregg," he says, "just set a tempo. Paul, you know where the chord is. Dylan, play the harmonica. Let's not make a big thing of this." The retake is quickly completed.

Over the rest of the January 14 sessions, "Subterranean Homesick Blues" needs one take. "She Belongs To Me" clicks with Gregg's drums. "Outlaw Blues", initially an acoustic blues, gets funkier with the band. Dylan needs one full take for an electric "Bob Dylan's 115th Dream", the laughter on the album track lifted from an aborted, acoustic take. He has three runs at "On The Road Again" and spends a further 13 frustrating takes on the third day of recording to get it down. By then, even Wilson's exasperated. There's a testy moment when he interrupts take 11 with a piercing whistle, as if he's trying to attract the attention of a distracted dog. "That tempo's *too fast* to squeeze all the words in, Bobby," he admonishes Dylan, who reacts angrily at the intrusion. "Hey, man, we were going to *do that*," he seethes. "You want to do it right?" Wilson asks. "If you want to do it like *that*, go ahead."

Astonishingly, "Maggie's Farm", "Gates Of Eden", "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" are all first takes. Dylan fumbles his first take of "It's Alright, Ma", however. He sounds momentarily desperate. "I really don't feel like *doing* this song. It's such a *long* song," he moans, sounding as if he's going to pack up his guitar and go home because he's not having fun any more. "Suit yourself," Wilson tells him. The next take is the one you hear on *Bringing It All Back Home*. A version of "Mr Tambourine Man" was cut for *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, with Ramblin' Jack Elliott, possibly drunk, on backing vocals. Dylan now tries it with the band, but after five takes has had enough. "The drums are driving me *mad*. I'm going out of my *brain*," he complains. He'll leave an electric version to The Byrds.

Bringing It All Back Home is in the shops by March 22. At the end of April, Dylan's in the UK with DA Pennebaker in tow. His last solo tour



Dylan in the studio, 1965

ends in London on May 10. On June 15-16, he's back in Studio A with a band that now includes Mike Bloomfield, a hot young guitarist steeped in Chicago blues, and Al Kooper on organ, working on songs for another new album, *Highway 61 Revisited*. "Phantom Engineer Number Cloudy" (originally attempted in London in May with John Mayall's Bluesbreakers) is at first a raw piano-led boogie that goes through some wild versions on its way to becoming "It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry". "Sitting On A Barbed Wire Fence" is mostly ferocious, Dylan on a couple of takes really howling, with Bloomfield tearing the place up. The last song Dylan attempts today is

"Like A Rolling Stone". He has four goes at it. The long day's blues hollering has taken its toll. "My voice is *gone*," he announces, managing one more take. The next day is spent on the song, to which an entire disc of both the Deluxe and Collector's editions of *The Cutting Edge* is dedicated [see panel, below].

Released as a single on July 20, "Like A Rolling Stone" pretty much remakes the world, becomes an anthem for a new generation of rock fans and appals the folkies even more than "Subterranean Homesick Blues". It's the opening number of his electric set at Newport on July 25, and unleashes a lot of hard feeling, Dylan condemned for his apostasy by hysterical former disciples. Dylan's response is usually thought to be "Positively Fourth Street", his nastiest song since "Ballad In Plain D", presumably written in the three days before he's back in Studio A on July 29, with a new producer, Bob Johnston, another wry Texan. The speed at which "Positively Fourth Street" is recorded – only four complete takes, three or four false starts – suggests, however, that Dylan may have it had in mind for some time. The arrangements already in place, a few of the changes need smoothing out. But otherwise it's arrived fully formed, although even up to take eight, Dylan's having problems with the words. "Bobby, would it help if we put the lyrics up there on the stand?" Johnston asks. "Naw," Dylan replies, clearly prone to these disconsolate moments. "It don't help at *all*."

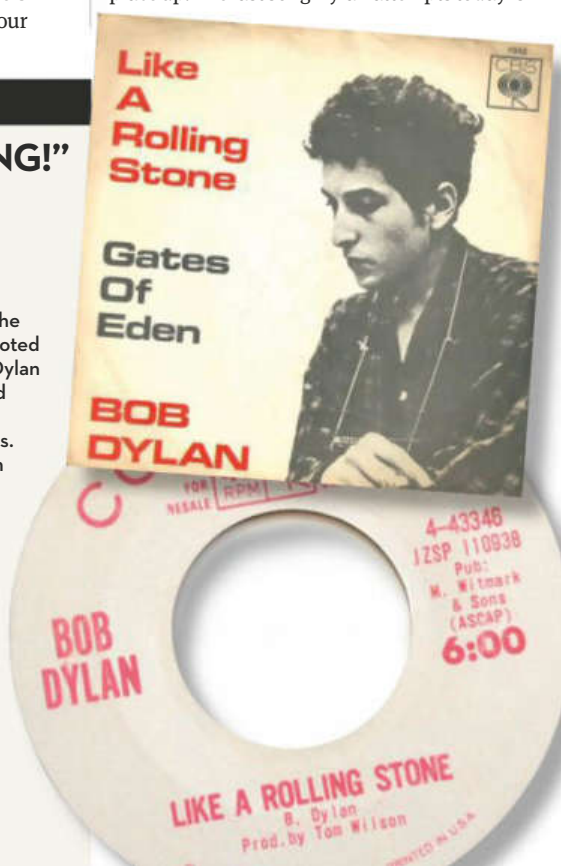
"Tombstone Blues" is easier to negotiate, although the band has difficulty finding the right tempo – "Don't play it. *Feel* it," Johnston advises. "It Takes A Lot To Laugh..." is finally nailed, slower now, a narcotic drawl. The session ends with a first pass at "Desolation Row", the version that sounds spookily like The Velvet Underground, previously released on *The Bootleg Series Vol 7*. The next day, "From A Buick 6" is

STONE AGE

"IT'S SIX MINUTES LONG!"

The evolution of "Like A Rolling Stone"

SUCH IS THE significance of "Like A Rolling Stone", an entire disc of both the Collector's and Deluxe editions is devoted to it. We hear it first as a rickety waltz, with Dylan on piano and Paul Griffin on organ, recorded at a late-night session on June 14, when the band work out the tempo and chord changes. Al Kooper turns up the next day, sitting in on organ. Griffin moves to the piano. The track comes together quickly. They nail it on take four. "That sounds good," Wilson says, but Dylan insists on another ten takes. It's like he's in thrall to it. "It's six minutes long, man!" he announces after one pass. The following takes are a bust, though "That's not it," Dylan moans, after take five. "How did we do it?" By take 13, he's desperate. "Why can't we get that *right*, man?" he asks, baffled, angry. A miraculous moment has clearly passed.





Now”, they haven’t got a definitive take, their best shot breaking down before the end (take 14, the version released on *The Bootleg Series Vol 1*). Dylan cuts an anguished solo piano version, a *Cutting Edge* highlight, available previously as an unofficial bootleg. Four days later, they cut quick versions of “Leopard-Skin Pill Box Hat” and work long into the night developing the epic “One Of Us Must Know (Sooner Or Later)”, its symphonic magnificence taking real shape by take 19 (of 24), with its glorious Paul Griffin piano part. It’s the only cut from these sessions that makes it onto *Blonde On Blonde*.

At Johnston’s suggestion, sessions relocate to Nashville, which raises eyebrows in New York. Rock’s hip young prince slumming it with a bunch of fiddle-playing rednecks in dungarees, how’s that going to work? But the handpicked crew waiting for Dylan (who brings Kooper and Robertson with him) at Nashville’s Studio A on February 14 are no bumpkins. Some of them have played with Elvis, for God’s sake. They’re young – only one of them is older than Dylan – bright, cool and immediately get what Dylan wants.

At their initial session they deliver a perfectly realised first take of “Visions Of Johanna”, giving Dylan the “wild mercury sound” he’s been looking for. The next day, after famously waiting ten hours in the studio for Dylan to finish writing it, they need only four takes to complete “Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands”.

Not everything on the album comes easily. “Rainy Day Women #12 & 35”, “Pledging My Time”, “Most Likely You Go Your Way (And I’ll Go Mine)”, “Absolutely Sweet Marie”, “Obviously Five Believers”, “Temporary Like Achilles” and “I Want You” are all done in four takes or less. But “Leopard-Skin Pill Box Hat” escapes them for 13 takes, descending into excruciating novelty, before being nailed in one go at the last session. “Stuck Inside Of Mobile With The Memphis Blues Again” needs 15 mostly down-tempo takes, the

song’s brisk familiarity only emerging late into the session. They need 18 runs at “Just Like A Woman”, including one (take four) set hilariously to a pounding Bo Diddley beat that gets wildly out of hand. “We lost, man,” Dylan says, laughing, as the track falls apart. “That’s one hell of a beat,” Johnston adds, slightly incredulous.

The fourth and final 13-hour session for *Blonde On Blonde* finishes on March 10 at seven in the morning. The next night, Dylan’s back on tour, in St Louis, Missouri; the day after in Lincoln, Nebraska. On April 7, he flies out of Los Angeles into the lunatic inferno of a world tour that ends in London on May 27. He’ll celebrate his next birthday on that tour. But when he steps out of Studio A into Nashville sunlight, *Blonde On Blonde* just finished, it’s a jolt to remember Bob Dylan is still only 24 years old.

quickly done, but “Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?” runs to 17 takes, one of which Columbia accidentally releases as a single, mistaking it for “Positively Fourth Street”. The third album session, on August 5, starts at eight the following evening and runs through until 3.30am. Dylan’s wired and whips through five storming versions of “Highway 61 Revisited”, finds the sun-blasted atmosphere of “Just Like Tom Thumb’s Blues” in three complete takes, “Ballad Of A Thin Man” in one and “Queen Jane Approximately” in four, plus a few false starts. He also records a striking solo piano version of “Desolation Row” and the acoustic take to which Charlie McCoy adds a famous guitar overdub on August 2.

Highway 61’s barely in the shops before Dylan’s back on the road. By September, he’s got a new touring band, Levon & The Hawks. On October 5, he calls a session at Studio A, to see what they sound like together in the studio. They jam on fragments of new songs like “Jet Pilot” and “Medicine Monday”, have a crack at “Can You Please Crawl Out Your Window?”, and sound hot on six takes of “I Wanna Be Your Lover”.

Seven weeks and 23 shows later, Dylan’s back in Studio A with The Hawks, with Bobby Gregg replacing Levon, who’s quit in a huff. Dylan’s got a major new song, “Freeze Out”, later renamed “Visions Of Johanna”. They have 14 runs at it. The Hawks are heavy-handed, can’t give Dylan the sound he wants. “I don’t want it so fast. It’s gonna be strong enough, ya know?” he laments after one pumped-up bar-band rock-out.

There’s more frustration on January 21. After nine hours and 14 takes of “She’s Your Lover

“I don’t want it so fast. It’s gonna be strong enough, ya know?”
Dylan laments

PRIME RARE CUTS

“WHY DO YOU HAVE TO BE SO FRANTIC?”

Apart from the myriad outtakes and alternative versions, there probably isn’t a lot on *The Cutting Edge* hardcore Dylanistas haven’t heard before. But less obsessive fans may be unfamiliar with at least the following tracks...

CALIFORNIA

THE DELUXE EDITION DISC 2

A piano-driven blues stomper originally recorded for *Bringing It All Back Home* that Dylan scrapped after one take. Originally mistaken for an early version of “Outlaw Blues”, but Dylan merely plundered a line from the earlier song. Weirdly, it turned up in 2009 in an episode of *NCIS* and featured on *NCIS: The Official TV Soundtrack - Vol 2*.

MEDICINE SUNDAY

THE DELUXE EDITION DISC 4

Notable as the first ‘song’ recorded with The Hawks, at New York’s Studio A, on October 5. It’s just a verse long and was never revisited, although, like “California”, had a line lifted for a later song – “Temporary Like Achilles”.

LUNATIC PRINCESS

THE DELUXE EDITION DISC 5

Also known as “Why Do You Have To Be So Frantic?”. This is another fragment, no more than a verse. Usually reliable Dylan discographer Clinton Heylin maintains it was knocked off at the end of the sessions for “Like A Rolling Stone”. The producers of *The Cutting Edge* place it at the end of the marathon “One Of Us Must Know (Sooner Or Later)” sessions.

THE HOTEL ROOM SESSIONS

THE COLLECTOR’S EDITION DISC 18

Perhaps the most beguiling unreleased material appears on the final Collector’s Edition disc, which collects 17 hotel-room performances that sound like ancient field recordings. Four of them were taped by journalist Bob Shelton, late at night in a Denver motel, on March 12. Dylan treated him to previews of “Just Like A Woman”, “Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands” and “Positively Van Gogh”, apparently newly written. There are 12 tracks from the London Savoy (May 4) and Glasgow’s North British Station Hotel (May 13), a crackly mix of blues, country and folk songs, a couple of which reappear on *The Basement Tapes*.



9/10

ASTRAL WEEKS

- 1 Astral Weeks
- 2 Beside You
- 3 Sweet Thing
- 4 Cyprus Avenue
- 5 The Way Young Lovers Do
- 6 Madame George
- 7 Ballerina
- 8 Slim Slow Slider
- 9 Beside You (Take 1)
- 10 Madame George (Take 4)
- 11 Ballerina (Long Version)
- 12 Slim Slow Slider (Long Version)



8/10

HIS BAND AND THE STREET CHOIR

- 1 Domino
- 2 Crazy Face
- 3 Give Me A Kiss
- 4 I've Been Working
- 5 Call Me Up In Dreamland
- 6 I'll Be Your Lover, Too
- 7 Blue Money
- 8 Virgo Clowns
- 9 Gypsy Queen
- 10 Sweet Jannie
- 11 If I Ever Needed Someone
- 12 Street Choir
- 13 Call Me Up In Dreamland (Take 10)
- 14 Give Me A Kiss (Take 3)
- 15 Gypsy Queen (Take 3)
- 16 I've Been Working (Alternate Version)
- 17 I'll Be Your Lover, Too (Alternate Version)



VAN MORRISON

Astral Weeks/His Band And The Street Choir WARNERBROS.

To be born again: two great Van albums reissued in expanded editions. *By Andy Gill*

"*IF I VENTURED in the slipstream, between the viaducts of your dreams...*" It's one of the most enigmatic, evocative opening lines in all of pop history, akin to Alice's dive down the rabbit-hole in the way it serves as an indication of the enchantments to come. Possibly the most *sui generis* album ever created, *Astral Weeks*, no matter how many times you've listened to it, somehow weaves its magic anew each time you return.

The LP's roots lay in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Morrison and his wife, Janet "Planet" Rigsbee, were living in 1968, hiding out from mob associates of the late producer/songwriter/label boss Bert Berns, who still held his contract (subsequently bought out by Warner Brothers' Joe Smith, who reportedly delivered \$20,000 to mobsters in an abandoned warehouse). Frustrated at the tight, claustrophobic arrangements Berns had insisted on

employing, Morrison was experimenting with just acoustic guitars, string bass and flute, and when it came time to record his new, expansive songs, producer Lewis Merenstein assembled a team of simpático jazz players more used to working with the likes of Eric Dolphy and Charles Mingus.

Recorded in New York's Century Sound Studios, the songs were borne along on the most flexible of jazz accompaniments – magically improvised, in some cases on the first take, by musicians who hadn't even had lead sheets or rehearsals – with haunting string arrangements overdubbed later. Low shivers of strings, glistening highlights of vibes, and feathery flutters of flute are lightly held together by rhythm guitar and double bass, while Morrison's scorched soul phrasing sketches a mystic yearning "*to be born again... in another world, in another time*". It's a series of spellbinding



virtually just Van's acoustic strumming and Richard Davis' yawning bass accompanying his vocal, with sparse vibes quietly underscoring the chords. The lack of strings does leach the song of some of its wistful sadness – in particular, the line “when you fall into a trance” doesn't soar so euphorically – and it seems to limp to an ending rather than surge towards it, Morrison concluding with a whisper, followed by the businesslike announcement for the next take.

Despite some nice interplay between guitar and vibes, an additional long version of “Ballerina” is spoilt by Morrison's rhythm guitar being higher in the mix, his occasional double-time flourishes blurring the delicate momentum, and by the more obtrusive entry of the burring horns three minutes in. There's also an uncut version of “Slim Slow Slider”, the haunting song about a dying girl (echoing Morrison's earlier “TB Sheets”) that closes the album. Played largely as a two-hander between Van's vocal and John Payne's soprano saxophone, it retains its enigmatic, troubling mood, but is then elongated with a further couple of minutes of sax improvisation, until Morrison draws it to a close by sombrely intoning “Glory be to Him” several times.

The other bonus cut, the first take of “Beside You”, is perhaps the most revealing. It's the earliest of the songs to be written, having originally been rehearsed with Them in 1966, and Morrison seems more comfortable with it: there's a smoother flow than the take eventually used on the album, but the delicate waltz between his and John Platania's guitars hasn't yet developed some of the latter's more affecting responses, like the figure answering the reference to “backstreets”; and the “breathe in, you breathe out” section is far less urgent. But what surprises is just how precisely Morrison has designed these songs, which, thanks to the arrangements, seem more improvised and free-form in structure. Certainly, through all the outtakes, his own delivery rarely wavers from the album versions, only “Madame George” accruing a more satisfying extemporised conclusion.

Also reissued here is an expanded edition of *His Band And The Street Choir*, often downgraded largely due to its being just brilliant rather than perfect, like its two immediate predecessors. Heard again after a long hiatus, it's a wonderful resolution of the lighter R'n'B elements of *Moondance*, with barely a misstep – although the worldly, less mystical nature of the material leaves it more enjoyable, rather than magical. Which isn't to say that it doesn't have myriad extraordinary moments, like the sprightly “Domino” (still Van's biggest US hit), and the mysterious, Band-like “Crazy Face” with its outlaw mystique and bizarre, trilled sax solo.

Of the additional outtakes, the third take of “Give Me A Kiss” finds the song closing in on its graceful, limber swing, while an alternative version of “I'll Be Your Lover, Too” seems more hesitant, lacking the focused quiet passion of the album version. Most entertaining are the first takes of “Gypsy Queen”, with Van responding to a fluffed intro with a genial, “Yer man... he's up in the

spacecraft or something, floating around up there”, before blowing the next intro himself.

The spartan funk groove of “I've Been Working”, though, provides the most thrilling of the five additional outtakes, given a faster, simplified stomp arrangement that starts like a James Brown workout and thrillingly develops the muscular momentum of a lost Northern Soul classic, complete with fine sax and trumpet solos.

performances, poised between emotion and imagination, memory and visualisation, past and future, with the woodwind and strings seeming to caress the soulful delivery from Morrison's very spirit.

Throughout the album, reveries of teenage romance and reminiscences of his Belfast youth mingle with fantasy visions and expressions of a desire for spiritual rebirth, for “transforming energy”, as he explained it. In “Cyprus Avenue”, courtly harpsichord and rhapsodic violin follow Morrison as he gazes from a car at a young girl, imagining her as a refined maiden from a historical tableau, riding in a horse-drawn carriage; while the album centrepiece, “Madame George”, offers an impressionistic portrait of bohemian Belfast, with the titular drag queen stirring confused feelings in adolescent boys. The conclusion, with Morrison's wistful humming echoed by the yearning strings as he waves “goodbye, goodbye, goodbye”, is endlessly, eternally moving.

“Madame George” is one of four tracks also included as outtakes in this expanded edition. Shorn of its string overdubs, and with the flute dropping out around three minutes in, it's

No matter how many times you've listened to Astral Weeks, it weaves its magic anew



ABYSSINIANS

Arise (reissue, 1978)

UNIVERSAL

Reissue of classic second, with dub versions

The deluge of albums from Virgin's reggae imprint Front Line in 1978 was a bold move, but one that

blurred the identities of its acts. Abyssinians, for example, were competing with a slew of high-class vocal trios on Front Line – Culture, The Gladiators, The Mighty Diamonds and Twinkle Brothers – among whom their less punchy, more contemplative approach got overlooked. The kudos the group enjoyed for their anthemic, much-covered “Satta Massagana” didn't help, proving a hard act to follow. Still, Bernard Collins and Lynford and Donald Manning made a decent fist of this second LP, dazzlingly attired on the cover, blending cool vocal harmonies inside. The material doesn't always match the quality of their singing; “Jah Loves” and “Wicked Man” are as generic as their titles suggest, while “Mightiest Of All”, spangled with rock guitar, is in the shadow of Marley. “This Land Is For Everyone” is the standout, making its egalitarian point in the same astringent tones as “Satta”, its militancy echoed on “South African Enlistment”, while “Hey You”, a rare love song, brings a vibrant, atypical performance. The Revolutionaries, providing backing, despatch everything with crisp efficiency, meaning the dub versions assembled here are a noteworthy addition.

EXTRAS: Four dub versions, and a brace of tracks from the group's Clinch label: “Praise Him” and “Forward Jah”.

NEIL SPENCER



THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

5 Classic Albums

UNIVERSAL

Duane and Gregg and “les brers” at their high tide

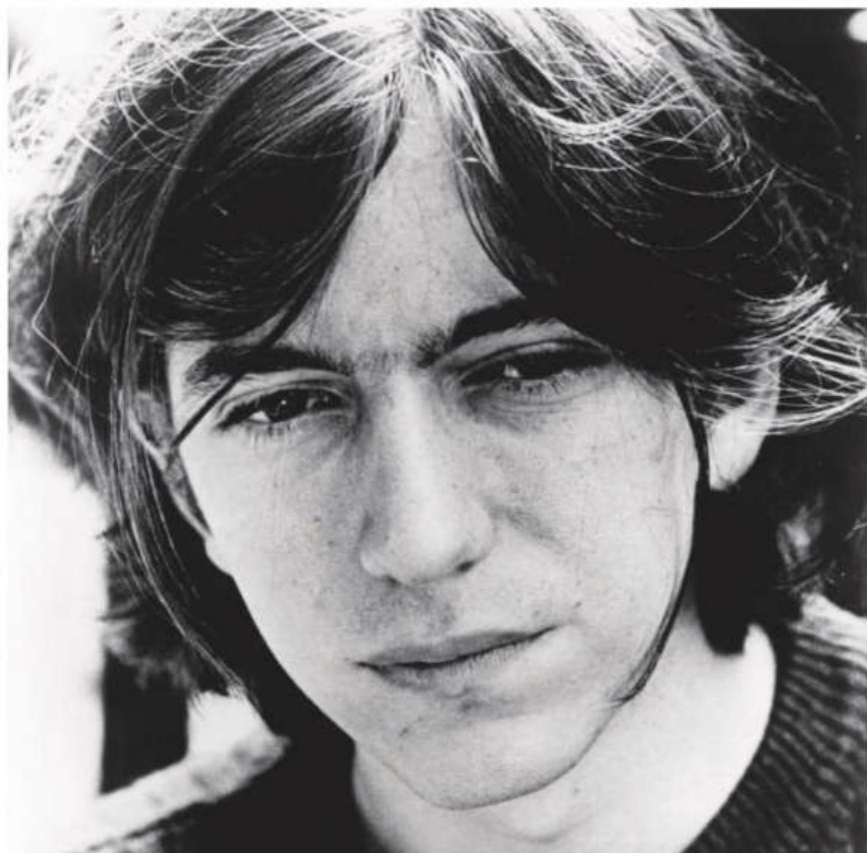
Possibly the most boring title ever – even calling this boxset something as cheesy as ‘The Birth Of Southern Rock’ would at least have shown willing. But never mind, for what's inside is undeniably “classic”, as the five Allmans albums recorded in their pomp between 1969-’73 have rarely been bettered, either by themselves or the countless (and mostly pointless) “jam bands” that are part of their legacy. The first four albums find Duane peeling off some of the most peerless slide ever heard, and listening again to the likes of “In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed” and the lovely, elegiac “Melissa” only reinforces what a tragedy his death was in 1971. Arguably the inclusion of 1973's *Brothers & Sisters*, the first album without him, doesn't quite fit; but Duane's spirit permeates the record, which also showed that brother Gregg and guitarist Dickey Betts were capable of fine music without him – even if the BBC should never be forgiven for hijacking the album's best tune, “Jessica”, as the *Top Gear* theme. The packaging is as rudimentary as the title is unimaginative, but to have this vital body of work available in a one-stop box for the first time is invaluable.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

Rediscovered!

Uncovering the underrated and overlooked



SCOTT FAGAN South Atlantic Blues

SAINT CECILIA KNOWS

7/10

Fascinating folk-soul curio from storied US traveller

Judging from the company he kept, Scott Fagan seemed destined for a starry career. Legendary songwriters Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman served as his management team, he was a regular at the Café Au Go Go in Greenwich Village (sharing bills with Richie

Havens and Jimi Hendrix), wrote songs for Irma Thomas and Linda Ronstadt, and almost became the first non-Beatle to sign to Apple.

Yet fame and recognition continued to elude him, leaving a legacy of two studio albums and a failed Broadway musical, 1971's *Soon*, that closed after three performances. Fagan's cult reputation was sealed when US pop artist Jasper Johns rescued a copy of 1968's *South Atlantic Blues* from a bargain bin and made a series of lithographs, 'Scott Fagan Record', that now reside in MoMA and the Metropolitan Museum Of Art in New York. As a postscript, it was revealed in 2000 that Fagan was the biological father of Magnetic Fields supremo Stephin Merritt. The pair didn't meet for another 13 years.

A conversation between Fagan and Merritt is included in the sleeve notes of this remastered version of *South Atlantic Blues*, a baleful collection of folk-rooted songs imprinted with R'n'B, Southern soul and calypso rhythms. The Caribbean influence is the direct result of Fagan's childhood in the US Virgin Islands, where he was raised by his mother in a "mud swamp slum". It was the sight of herds of "naked children digging in garbage cans and feeding themselves with whatever they were able to come up with", he says, that made him decide to become an artist, bringing their plight to the wider world.

The title track of *South Atlantic Blues* addresses the "crazy alcoholic violence" of the poverty he grew up in, his words carried by an impassioned voice that sounds like a tremorous corollary of Rodriguez, another outsider who toiled without reward for many years. "It was me working reality into beautiful music," Fagan says of the song. "I wanted to sing stuff that would provoke change." Many of these tunes, like the eloquent "Madame-Moiselle" and the muted pop of "Nickels And Dimes", are decorated with baroque strings and horns, lending an upbeat flavour to downcast moods.

Apple were supposedly torn between issuing this album or James Taylor's self-titled debut. *South Atlantic Blues*, of course, lost out in the end, finding a home instead on Atco, who duly failed to promote it at all. It was, as this reissue proves, a gross oversight.

ROB HUGHES



ALTERNATIVE TV Viva La Rock'n'Roll: The Complete Deptford Fun City Recordings 1977-80

CHERRY RED

9/10

**Turn on, tune in,
drop out: hippy-punks'
glory years**

Sniffin' Glue editor Mark Perry burned off arriviste new wavers fast; Alternative TV were a real punk band for the span of four brilliant singles before the disgruntled former bank clerk ditched his "proper musician" co-writer Alex Fergusson. They ended the decade playing their own brand of have-a-go experimental noise while audiences asked in vain whether they wouldn't mind playing "Action Time Vision". This 4CD set documents their heroic, doomed crusade: those splendid early sevens; improv-heavy live/studio debut album, *The Image Has Cracked*; grippingly atonal follow-up *Vibing Up The Senile Man (Part One)*, and then the archipelago of low-budget releases that followed as Perry's gauche compulsion to reveal all in his lyrics turned him into an avant-garde Adrian Mole. "Death Looks Down", from his 1980 solo LP *Snappy Turns*, is a pinnacle of sorts, the political, emotional and metaphysical coming together to the sound of a cruelly mistreated charity-shop violin. "Our audience just didn't know what we were going on about," Perry notes wistfully; genuine anarchy in the UK.

EXTRAS: Peel sessions and tracks from a host of the picture, "Fellow Sufferer" and "Music Death" both essential additions to the canon.

JIM WIRTH



MARC BOLAN & T.REX

**Unchained: Home
Recordings &
Studio Outtakes
1972-1977**

EDSEL

8/10

**Bolan's imperial-era
outfits and unheard
recordings, reissued for the second time**

First released in the mid-1990s on a series of eight CDs and then repackaged as a box in 2010, this is the latest handsome version of Bolan's unreleased output from his creative and cultural peak. The lost songs are fascinating, collectively offering an insight into the progress and working methods of a major pop star, even if the quantity – 184 tracks – can overwhelm. Divided chronologically, the songs include fully formed home recordings, acoustic fragments and false starts – several are labelled "Riff" or "Jam" – but also material taken from the studio, ready for release including several alternative songs from the Bolan's *Zip Gun* era. There are numerous highlights – from the lovely bluesy acoustic "Did You Ever" and Dylanesque "Unicorn Horn" in 1972, to soul-disco numbers like "Foxy Boy", from 1975-'77. Some songs appear several times, as Bolan takes different runs at them – "Sailors Of The Highway" appears on Disc 1 as a funky strut and then again on Disc 8 as a piano-led spiritual. While the strongest material is on the earlier discs, it still demonstrates how much Bolan had to offer at the time of his death. The only quibble is that it's all been reissued before.

EXTRAS: New packaging, artwork, photos and revised notes by Mark Paytress.

PETER WATTS



JACK BRUCE

Sunshine Of Your Love: A Life In Music
UNIVERSAL

7/10

Edited highlights spread over two discs, but with rather too many gaps...

Jack Bruce's death in 2014 certainly deserved marking with a new career retrospective, but how to do justice to 50 years of music over two discs? Do you try to represent every facet of a long and diverse career or cherry-pick the most popular moments, ignoring the more esoteric nooks and crannies? This 35-track set – released to coincide with a star-studded tribute concert to mark the first anniversary of his death – opts for the latter. We get eight tracks from Cream and a similar number from *Songs For A Tailor* and *Harmony Row*, the first two hugely inventive solo albums, which he never bettered. The running order is organised chronologically, and halfway through Disc 2 we reach a song titled "The Best Is Yet To Come". But it isn't, as we're still stuck in 1978 and the final 36 years of his career are covered in just eight tracks, half of them from 2014's *Silver Rails*. There's nothing from his early days with Graham Bond et al and his post-Cream power trio with Leslie West and Corky Laing (West, Bruce & Laing) is ignored, as are his various jazz collaborations. The result is that, despite the title, what we get is only part of Bruce's life in music.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



MICHAEL CHAPMAN

The Man Who Hated Mornings
(reissue, 1977)
SECRET

7/10

Singer-guitarist's bluff late-'70s opus

Chapman's porous approach to his art, one that allowed him to mix blues, folk and jazz to telling effect, didn't always pay off. *The Man Who Hated Mornings*, the last in the trilogy of albums cut for Deram in the '70s, seemingly finds him trying to reconcile life as a prospective rock star with that of a cult troubadour, aided by old pal Mick Ronson, keyboardist Pete Wingfield, drummer Keef Hartley and more. "Dogs Got More Sense" is a pub-rock chugger (and not the wisest choice for a lead-off single, as Deram suggested), while neither "Falling Apart" nor a cover of Blind Alfred Reed's "Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls?" rank among his essential work. That said, there is still plenty to admire. The epic "Northern Lights", in which he trades eloquent licks with violinist Johnny Van Derrick, is an agreeable detour into gypsy-rock, driven by Chapman's gruff vocal tones. The title track is a lovely folk-jazz meditation that shifts between carefree and impassioned. Best of all is a moody, pungent version of Bob Dylan's "Ballad In Plain D", a modal triumph that runs seamlessly into Chapman's own instrumental, "Steel Bonnets".

EXTRAS: A bonus version of "Dogs Got

3/10 More Sense".

ROB HUGHES



GENE CLARK

The Complete Ebbett's Field Broadcast
SONIC BOOM

9/10

Off the grid: enigmatic ex-Byrd picks up the pieces after infamous David Geffen dust-up

Though Gene Clark had just recorded one of the most ambitious, remarkable albums in pop history – *No Other* – he knew it was already commercially doomed when he headed out in a beat-up Dodge van in winter 1975 for a series of tour dates with Silverado, aka Duke Bardwell and Roger White. So he reversed course: with a low-key, stripped down, two guitars/bass/harp combo, returning to his roots (shades of Dillard & Clark) with dollops of country twang and Appalachian harmony, he recast sections of his entire catalogue. A pair of country warhorses – "Long Black Veil" and "In The Pines" – set the context. The band plays from the gut, rough and unpolished, yet when Clark's vocals hit their burning, yearning heights, they hit a forlorn peak, a high lonesome sound lost on the disco generation. It's not all downbeat: the playful "Home Run King" strikes a galloping groove, and Clark obsessives will delight in the crackling rocker "Daylight Line", never captured in the studio. While Byrds remakes "Here Without You" and "Set You Free This Time" are brilliantly recast with a sly soul singer's undertow, "Silver Raven", "She Darked The Sun" and "No Other", signature songs all, haunt amid Clark's starkest, spookiest personae.

EXTRAS: None.

LUKE TORN



NEKO CASE

Truckdriver, Gladiator, Mule
ANTI-

8/10

Lavish vinyl boxset from versatile American songstress

What's immediately

apparent when taking these seven albums (and one EP) in sequence – from 1997 debut *The Virginian* through to 2013's *The Worse Things Get, The Harder I Fight, The Harder I Fight, The More I Love You* – is that Neko Case has one of the great voices of the modern era. Her earliest work is bracingly strident, be it ravaging the Everlys' "Bowling Green" or creating her own myth with "Set Out Running". The latter is a highlight of the majestic *Furnace Room Lullaby* (2000), though it can be argued that Case didn't truly find her métier until 2006's *Fox Confessor Brings The Flood*, the folklore-inspired masterpiece that brought a fresh elasticity and tenderness to her singing style. It's fascinating, too, to trace the evolution of her music, from the twangy countryisms of those first records to a more inclusive realm where jazz, blues and outcrops of gospel begin to take root ("Hold On, Hold On"; "John Saw That Number"). *Middle Cyclone*, from 2009, hit on an elemental theme to match the potency of her vocals, crafting beauties like "This Tornado Loves You", while *The Worse Things Get...* features moments of raw sensitivity, none more affecting than "Where Did I Leave That Fire?".

EXTRAS: None.

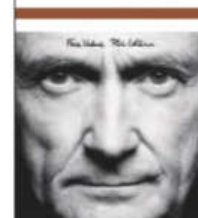
ROB HUGHES

REVELATIONS

Alternative TV's commercial breakdown... by Mark Perry



➤ "People thought I let the punk side down but I thought everyone should be doing stuff like that," Mark Perry tells *Uncut* as he recalls Alternative TV's 1977-'80 metamorphosis from punk prime movers to dog-on-a-string Sun Ra, as documented in their new boxset. The former *Sniffin' Glue* editor's music dissolved via rickety Krautrock into a mélange of free jazz, musique concrète and extreme confessional with their second LP, '79's *Vibing Up The Senile Man*, which proved too far-out for Neanderthal punks. "It got violent," Perry recalls of ATV's attempt to tour the LP. "Audiences had only just caught up with Stiff Little Fingers and The Clash, and we turn up with The Pop Group. We look like hippies to them 'cos they've been fed with what punk was through Sounds." A slow career suicide, maybe, but popularity was never Perry's prime motivation. "People see it in terms of success; when they talk about indie music it's always Ian Curtis and The Smiths – but why?" he says of ATV's heroic quest for commercial oblivion. "What's happening on *Vibing Up The Senile Man* – that's true DIY. No-one truly broke it all down like we did." JIM WIRTH



PHIL COLLINS

Face Value/Both Sides (reissues, 1981, 1993)
ATLANTIC

7/10

First instalment of hefty career retrospective

It can't have been great to have had his bandmate describe his departure from Genesis in 1996 as "an opportunity, rather than a problem", as Tony Banks did, but the parting was amicable and, anyhow, Phil Collins was champing at the creative bit. His solo debut of 15 years earlier was a five-times platinum hit in the US and UK and

5/10

cemented his status as a premier-league AOR pop/soft-rock musician with a fondness for jazz fusion and funk lite, nursing only a slight prog hangover. *Face Value* leads in a roll-out of eight remastered reissues compiled by Collins. Standouts are the punchy "I Missed Again", a '70s Elton-/John Martyn-styled "The Roof Is Leaking" and the career-defining "In The Air Tonight", used to unsettling effect in a 2007 Cadbury TV ad starring a drumming gorilla. The self-produced, synth-heavy *Both Sides* shares *Face Value*'s dark heart but is a more maudlin affair, weighted with ballads like "I've Forgotten Everything" and including political comment, the aforementioned track featuring Collins on bagpipes. What a difference 12 years made.

EXTRAS: One disc apiece of live versions and 7/10 demos, many previously unreleased.

SHARON O'CONNELL



RHODA DAKAR Sings The Bodysnatchers

CHERRY RED

The debut album from the 2 Tone girl group, just the 35 years late...

6/10

Signed to 2 Tone after just two gigs, The

Bodysnatchers saw their debut single, "Let's Do Rock Steady", reach the UK Top 20, leading to an appearance on *Top Of The Pops*. Tours with The Selecter and the Specials and a support slot to Toots & the Maytals followed before the all-girl band abruptly broke up in 1981 without recording an album, lead singer Rhoda Dakar quitting to hook up with Jerry Dammers to release "The Boiler" (credited to "Rhoda with the Special AKA") and to sing on "Free Nelson Mandela". Now comes what is billed as The Bodysnatchers' "lost 2 Tone album", a collection of songs originally intended for the LP that should've appeared in 1981. Three of the ten songs featured on singles but the rest were only ever played live, now belatedly recorded in 2015 by a band assembled for the purpose by Dakar and including Specials veterans Lynval Golding and Horace Panter. With no attempt at stylistic updating, the results sound like a classic 2 Tone period piece, the familiar upbeat ska beat juxtaposed against defiant lyrics redolent of the Thatcherite sufferation under which they were written, as if the record had been buried in a time capsule 35 years ago and labelled "do not open until 2015".

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



WOLFGANG FLÜR Eloquence: Complete Works

SFE/CHERRY RED

Archival haul from ex-Kraftwerk member Wolfgang Flür will always be remembered,

6/10

first and foremost, as a one-time member of German electronic pioneers Kraftwerk – he was part of the group during the most storied phase of their career, from 1973 to 1987, when albums like *Autobahn* and *The Man-Machine* helped engineer a new consciousness for electronic music. His subsequent career, though, has been spotty at best: his memoir of his time with Kraftwerk, *I Was A Robot*, was perhaps better known for the controversy it caused, with group founders Hütter and Schneider subsequently filing a lawsuit against Flür over disputed content. His 1990s project, Yamo, saw Flür working with Mouse On Mars; more recently, he's teamed up with Jack Dangers of Meat Beat Manifesto for the "Staying In The Shadow" single. That song appears on *Eloquence*, a collection of mostly unreleased songs from Flür's 21st-century archive. Like Yamo's *Time Pie*, it's a patchy set, largely due to Flür's vocals and lyrics, which often detract from the finely detailed, glittering electronic pop that makes up the body of the album. Collaboration broadens his purview – see the weird late-night jazz of "Golden Light", with Anni Hogan – but Flür's best served by instrumentals.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



GARBAGE Garbage – 20th Anniversary Edition

STUN VOLUME

Manson and co mark two decades of service by dusting off their debut When Garbage first

7/10

appeared in the mid-'90s, grunge purists were sniffy about this Grammy-festooned band comprising Scottish singer Shirley Manson plus three Americans – drummer Butch Vig (producer of Nirvana's *Nevermind*), bassist Duke Erikson and guitarist Steve Marker. While it's true that this mega-selling debut took a sander to the genre's rough edges, adding seams of electronica and trip-hop, the frequent blasts of noise combined with lyrical darkness – "I can't use what I can't abuse" sang Manson in "Vow" – ensured they had one foot in the alt-rock camp, even if the other was in pop. Twenty years on, it's clear that *Garbage* was of its time – grunge had gone mainstream and indie kids were opening their ears to new, more pop-oriented sounds – though much of it still stands up. Opening tracks "Supervixen", "Queer" and "Only Happy When It Rains" arrive like artillery fire, genuinely thrilling indie-rock anthems. Garbage would scale greater commercial heights with their Bond theme song and, through Manson's tabloid-friendly rantings, would be thrust on to the celeb circuit, but they never bettered these early songs. Bow down indeed.

EXTRAS: A second disc with assorted remixes

7/10

and unreleased tracks.

FIONA STURGES

HOW TO BUY... OVERLOOKED 2 TONE CLASSICS



RICO That Man Is Forward

2 TONE, 1981

Horn-heavy, jazz-inflected instrumental ska-reggae on the belated follow-up to his 1976 Island classic *Man From Wareika*. Recorded after Rico Rodriguez had joined the Specials, but with a bunch of top Jamaican sessioners at Joe Gibbs' Kingston studio rather than with his new bandmates.

7/10



THE SPECIALS Live At The Moonlight Club

2 TONE/CHRYSALIS, 1992

Allegedly taped without permission by Decca – whose offices were next door to the Moonlight – this live set predated the band's debut studio album and captures them in raw-but-stonking form on the night before the 1979 General Election. Heavily bootlegged, it got an official release 13 years later.

7/10



VARIOUS ARTISTS Dance Craze

2 TONE, 1981

The soundtrack of Joe Massot's *Dance Craze* 2 Tone doc, featuring the Specials, The Bodysnatchers and Madness, plus the only appearance of Bad Manners on the label. Early vinyl copies are highly collectable as later versions dropped the Madness tracks due to copyright issues.

8/10

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



HALF JAPANESE Volume 4: 1997-2001

FIRE ARCHIVE

The final set in Fire's heroic reissue series

Half Japanese are always going to be measured by their early, form-

7/10

destroying records: albums such as *1/2 Gentlemen/Not Beasts*, *Loud* and *Horrible* combine a radical approach to rock music with a warped pop vision and a completely unique take on post-beat vocal and lyrical scrawl. But making the same record over and over was never an option for Half Japanese – for one thing, the group's constitution, which by the '90s was Jad Fair plus various ring-in players, changing up from album to album, wouldn't allow it. *Volume 4: 1997-2001* pulls together the final three Half Japanese albums from their first, extended run – *Bone Head* from 1997, *Hello* from 2001, and the mammoth *Heaven Sent*, also from 1997 and consisting, largely, of one hour-long song, perhaps Half Japanese's greatest formal conceit yet. On "Heaven Sent", you can hear how Fair had developed a strong relationship with the then-current Half Japanese lineup in a relatively quick time – there's a wild leap from *Bone Head*'s simplistic songs, which edge uncomfortably close to pro forma indie rock at times, to "Heaven Sent"'s hypnotic radiance. Released four years later, *Hello* is a strong denouement, though with "Heaven Sent", Half Japanese had said their piece.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



THE JAM Fire And Skill: The Jam Live

UNIVERSAL/POLYDOR

Six-disc set of previously unreleased concerts

Running sequentially, from the 100 Club in September 1977 to Wembley Arena in

9/10

December 1982, *Fire And Skill* documents The Jam's

narrative arc in the band's purest and most immediate form: as a live act. Each of the six concerts here captures Weller and co at a key moment in their career: Disc Three, for instance, finds the band previewing songs from *Sound Affects*; Disc Five, meanwhile, takes place ahead of the release of *The Gift*. It says much about the speed at which Weller and cohorts moved during the six years represented here that by the time they reach Wembley on their "farewell" tour, the setlist has changed completely. The energy and commitment are consistent throughout, however. Witness the rawboned, post-punk riffs of "A Bomb In Wardour Street" at Reading University in 1979; a powerful "Liza Radley" from Newcastle City Hall the following year; the defiant, sweaty "Precious" at Hammersmith in 1981 and a triumphant "Beat Surrender" – with backing vocalists, brass and organ – from Wembley. It's possible to trace, too, subtle changes in the songs that do recur. The four versions of "The Modern World" offer insights into Weller's developing interests, transitioning from spiky punk in '77 to '79's more soulful take.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER

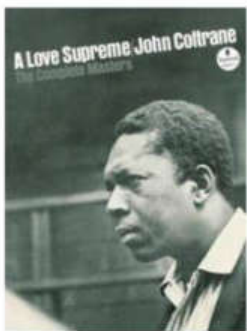


JOHN COLTRANE

A Love Supreme: The Complete Masters

IMPULSE/VERVE

A modern jazz classic reissued... with extras. *By Richard Williams*



9/10

NOMINATED FOR TWO Grammy awards in 1965, John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* was beaten by Ramsey Lewis' *The In Crowd* for best jazz performance by a small group and by Paul Horn and Lalo Schiffrin's *Jazz Suite On The Mass Texts* for best original jazz composition. Half a century later, it is one of the two modern

jazz albums most likely to be present in the collections of people who possess only two modern jazz albums.

Like the other candidate for that distinction, Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue*, it seemed to have sprung fully grown from the imagination of its creator, apparently requiring neither rehearsal nor revision. The amount of ancillary material – the equivalent of preliminary sketches and offcuts – is therefore minimal. This has made it hard for producers to construct the enhanced versions devised as a lure to get people who acquired it the first time to buy it all over again, particularly when an anniversary, such as *A Love Supreme*'s golden jubilee, is spotted by the marketing department.

The first expanded version of Coltrane's masterpiece appeared in 2002, as part of Universal's Deluxe Edition series. Alongside the original 33-minute quartet recording, for which Coltrane was joined in Rudy Van Gelder's New Jersey studio by his

regular lineup of McCoy Tyner (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums), it contained a second disc including the only live performance of the suite, recorded by the same personnel at the Antibes Jazz Festival in July 1965, shortly after the album's release in the United States. The remaining bonus tracks were two outtakes of "Resolution", the suite's second movement, by the quartet, and two of "Acknowledgement", its opening movement, by an expanded version of the group, with the young tenor saxophonist Archie Shepp and the veteran bassist Art Davis added to the lineup.

This new edition – curated by Ashley Kahn, the author of a fine book about the album published by Granta a few years ago, and Harry Weinger, the genius behind Hip-O Select's peerless Motown compilations – comes in two sizes. A two-disc version contains the original album, plus seven outtakes from the quartet and sextet sessions, and two mono "reference" versions of the finished third and fourth movements, "Pursuance" and "Peace", which were given to Coltrane by his producer, Bob Thiele, to take home from the session. The three-disc "Super Deluxe Edition" adds the Antibes concert and extra sleeve notes relating to the live performance.

Fellow fanatics will be interested to hear, from the mono reference tape, the brief double-stopped figure with which Garrison ends "Psalm" (excised from the finished master), and the version of the same piece before Coltrane overdubbed a few notes on alto saxophone to the coda. His original scheme for the suite apparently involved a much larger group, with two basses, and three percussionists (two on congas plus one timbale); the half-dozen takes of the sextet version of "Acknowledgement" hint at why the attempt at expansion failed, although the idea was only temporarily abandoned and would return with further large-scale works, *Ascension* and *Meditations*, the following year.

TRACKLIST

DISC 1

The Original Stereo Album, Impulse! AS-77

- 1 Part I - Acknowledgement
- 2 Part II - Resolution
- 3 Part III - Pursuance
- 4 Part IV - Psalm

Trane's Original Mono Reference Masters

- 5 Part III - Pursuance - Mono
- 6 Part IV - Psalm - Mono

DISC 2

Quartet Session: Dec 9, 1964

- 1 Part I - Acknowledgement
Vocal Overdub 2
- 2 Part I - Acknowledgement
Vocal Overdub 3
- 3 Part II - Resolution
Alternative Take 4 44-192
- 4 Part II - Resolution
Alternative Take 6 44-192
- 5 Part IV - Psalm Undubbed Version

Sextet Session: Dec 10, 1964

- 6 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 1 Alternate
- 7 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 2 Alternate
- 8 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 3 Alternate
- 9 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 4 Alternate
- 10 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 5 Alternate
- 11 Part I - Acknowledgement
Take 6 Alternate

DISC 3

Live At Festival Mondial du Jazz Antibes, July 26, 1965

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Part 1 - Acknowledgement
- 3 Part 2 - Resolution
- 4 Part 3 - Pursuance
- 5 Part 4 - Psalm

The Antibes set gives us a looser, less solemn but still mesmerising version of the whole piece, including a version of "Pursuance" that finds Coltrane stretching out in the mode of his great 1961 live recording "Chasin' The Trane", oblivious to everything but the pursuit of nirvana in the company of Jones' tireless drumming. At no time was *A Love Supreme* in Coltrane's live repertoire; he had agreed to play the composition, Kahn tells us, in response to a request from the French jazz composer Jef Gilson, who had heard an advance copy of the album.

The booklet accompanying this latest reissue contains hitherto unseen session photographs, facsimiles of the relevant pages from Van Gelder's diary, Coltrane's early blueprint for the score and his handwritten notes, including the prayer intended to provide an accompanying text to the music. These jottings really do draw us closer to the great man at the very peak of his career, when he was funneling his increasingly urgent spiritual concerns through the medium of the instrumental skills he had spent 20 years perfecting with something close to obsession. We can now see that alongside an exhortation to "Keep your eye on God" he scrawled another aide-memoire: "Buy reeds in S.F."

No-one should purchase either of these sets expecting fresh revelations. In neither of its formats does *A Love Supreme: The Complete Masters* significantly increase an understanding of either the inspiration or the methodology behind a work best absorbed by the newcomer via the form in which Coltrane chose to give it to us. But in whatever format, the work retains all the power that led Patti Smith to describe it as possessing "the feeling of moral authority in the most humble and spiritual way". On its arrival in 1965, at a time when Coltrane's music had so often appeared to mirror the dark turbulence of world affairs, its perfect combination of intensity and clarity made it stand out from everything around it. In 50 years, not much has changed.



SUN CITY GIRLS

Torch Of The Mystics (reissue, 1990)

ABDUCTION

Arizona psych-rock heretics' crazed classic. *By Jon Dale*



9/10

THEY HAVE BEEN many things to many people over the years – exotica merchants; performance anti-artists; mythopoeic poets – but if there's one thing that defined the long-running underground saga of avant-ethno-psych-rock trio Sun City Girls, it was their

unpredictability. Originating from Tempe, Arizona and founded by the Bishop brothers Alan and Richard (who played, predominantly, bass and guitar, respectively), the group's three-decade tenure ended in 2007 after the passing of drummer Charles Gocher. Across those years, tales of their pranksterism were legion. Live, they've been known to improvise a hobos-around-the-campfire skit, or give a slideshow of a trip to Bali; maybe Alan would turn up in his Uncle Jim alter ego and berate the crowd. Once they advertised a gig as "Sun City Girls play John Coltrane's *Live In Seattle*" and then proceeded to play an original copy of said Coltrane album over the venue's PA. They've performed a pitch-perfect cover of the soundtrack to Jodorowsky's *El Topo*. And so on.

For all their wildness, though, the Sun City Girls held their cards close to their chest, and sometimes they could shock longterm listeners with albums that accessed something spectrally "other". *Torch Of The Mystics*, one such album, was recorded at a critical juncture for the group. They'd already made some important, if unexpected, connections: circling around the scene that birthed the Meat

Puppets, who alongside Butthole Surfers would become one of their few taggable peers in the American underground, they found themselves playing alongside hardcore groups like Black Flag and JFA, whose Placebo imprint released some early Sun City Girls albums. That string of records from across the '80s pinned the group as, variously, denizens of modern esoterica, a wildly flailing improvised rock troupe, or a multi-headed hydra somewhere between goof-off and stinging political critique, while their self-released Cloaven Cassettes series gave free rein to their wildest urges.

Torch Of The Mystics would be the last album they recorded before brother Rick moved from Tempe to Seattle. It's tempting, then, to see it as the culmination of "phase one" of Sun City Girls. It certainly comes across as a clearing of the decks – soon after, their music became more expansive and unpredictable on gravity-defying sides like *Bright Surroundings*, *Dark Beginnings*. It's also a rare Sun City Girls album for being drawn entirely from the same sessions, recorded in 1988. And it's structured perfectly, with a vicious, rough-housing Side One – the closest they've come to making a perfect rock statement – giving way, on Side Two, to multiple detours into majority-world peregrination.

Torch Of The Mystics opens with the clarion ring of "Blue Mamba", where a honed riff falls like hammer to anvil, before droning vocals wind out a sinus-cavity hum, Rick Bishop breaking ranks midway for the first of many spiralling guitar anti-solos. "Tarmac 23" has the Girls singing incantations in

TRACKLIST

- 1 Blue Mamba
- 2 Tarmac 23
- 3 Esoterica Of Abyssynia
- 4 Space Prophet Dogon
- 5 The Shining Path
- 6 The Flower
- 7 Café Batik
- 8 Radar 1941
- 9 Papa Legba
- 10 The Vinegar Stroke
- 11 Burial In The Sky

what sounds like a made-up or channelled language, while they sit on one brooding chord; "Esoterica Of Abyssynia" twists through a slippery, break-neck speed melody from the Orient, mutating at unexpected moments into untethered improvisation. So far, they've given us rock music from other planes of there, recorded close to "in the red", the drums clattering away underneath cavernous reverb.

But the following "Space Prophet Dogon" shifts the tone: its descending melody and stately pace are strangely regal.

It's a long, deep exhale, after which things get, in many ways, weirder and weirder. "The Shining Path" is a faithful cover of Bolivian folk song "Llorando Se Fue" – popularised in 1989 by French group Kaoma as "Lambada" – which reclaims the song's melancholy. "Café Batik" is a spooked organ ceremonial, with Alan Bishop sighing out in a dream-world falsetto; "Radar 1941" is a seasick, drunken anti-shanty; "The Vinegar Stroke" a warped, snake-charming rattle that prefigures some of Sir Richard Bishop's later solo moves.

There are, perhaps, more widescreen Sun City Girls albums – 1996's 330,003 *Crossdressers From Beyond The Rig Veda* is a stunning snapshot tour of *détourned* world music; 1993's *Kaliflower* is by turns tightly wound and eerily psychedelic – but *Torch Of The Mystics* stands as the perfect expression of what Sun City Girls, at the very top of their game, could be. It's as close to a desert island disc as you're going to get, and one of the very few albums to survive the '90s underground with its mystique and magic untarnished. A wholly holistic trip.

Q&A

Alan Bishop

Many fans thought we'd never see these Sun City Girls reissues... In January, Jimmy at Forced Exposure pointed out that 2015 was the 25th anniversary of the original release, and then Dave Segal at Seattle's *The Stranger* wrote an article entitled, "When will Sun City Girls reissue *Torch Of The Mystics*?", so we did it, although I'd have rather waited for the 37th anniversary or something non-celebratory, but that's just me.

How did you respond to hearing this music from your former self? I heard it last year for the first time in a while and it always sounds good to me. One thing that struck me was how angelically beautiful Charlie [Gocher]'s voice came through on "Papa Legba".

What are your memories of recording *Torch Of The Mystics*? We were living in a small Tempe apartment in 1988. I borrowed David Oliphant's eight-track recorder and a few microphones, asked him questions about using it, kept my notes at hand, and then recorded and mixed a ton of material. We cut it in a variety of locations, much of it live.



ROD MCKUEN In The Beginning: Narrates His Poetry And Sings

ÉL RECORDS

7/10

Early songs and poetry from legendary Brel interpreter

McKuen, who passed away earlier this year, is often remembered as “The King Of Kitsch”, as *Newsweek* once unkindly described the singer, songwriter and poet. There’s an element of truth there, sure: McKuen’s early successes were novelty songs, such as “Oliver Twist”, or his single with Bob McFadden, Dor’s “The Mummy”. On his early albums, though, McKuen self-styled firstly as a beatnik, on the spoken word *Beatsville*, and then as a singer of gentle, discreetly arranged folk and jazz, as on the lovely *Songs For A Lazy Afternoon*, the 1956 album whose titular song, James Moross and John Latouche’s standard “Lazy Afternoon”, opens *In The Beginning*. On these early recordings, McKuen’s voice doesn’t have the rasp that came with later years, and the settings, both for the standards McKuen covers, and his own songs, are surprisingly minimal affairs, the singer settling down amid sparing double bass, guitar, piano, and flecks of harp or woodwind. The spoken-word settings here though, from *The Yellow Unicorn*, are a little jejune. *In The Beginning* covers 1956 to 1962, so we miss McKuen’s revelatory discovery of Jacques Brel in the mid ’60s, but it captures well the singer’s formative charm.

EXTRAS: None.

JON DALE



OTIS REDDING Soul Manifesto 1964-1970

RHINO

The soul legend’s complete works on 12 essential discs

9/10

Otis Redding’s classic third album, *Otis Blue*,

is rated his five-star classic and was recently issued in a “collector’s edition” to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its release. It holds pole position in this 12-disc set, which includes all 10 studio albums plus two live releases – but there’s plenty else that’s just as essential. Even on covers-heavy debut album, 1964’s *Pain In My Heart*, you can hear that at only 22 years of age, Redding had already absorbed the contrasting styles of his two heroes, Sam Cooke and Little Richard, to create a voice uniquely potent and authoritative. What impresses is how many album tracks never released as 45s are every bit as powerful as the hits – try the late-night ballad “Cigarettes & Coffee” from 1966’s *The Soul Album*, the deep-fried “My Lover’s Prayer” and his glorious take on The Beatles’ “Day Tripper” from *Dictionary Of Soul* and almost anything on *King & Queen*, the irrepressible 1967 duets album with Carla Thomas. Inevitably the quality control falls a little on some of the posthumous albums; but listening to these 120-plus songs as a body of work – vast in both size and accomplishment – it seems incredible to recall that he was still only 26 when he died.

EXTRAS: None.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON



RIDE Nowhere25

RIDE MUSIC

Shoegaze gem celebrates its quarter century

By the time they came to release their debut LP in October 1991, Ride had released three exceptional

8/10

EPs that year; it says much about the songwriting that *Nowhere* sustained this earlier momentum. Originally released over eight tracks – with the contemporaneous “Fall” EP added on to the CD edition – *Nowhere* foregrounded the back-and-forth between Mark Gardener and Andy Bell’s guitars, the intuitive balance of melody and noise. Indeed, while Ride were often perceived as acolytes of My Bloody Valentine’s noisecraft, in fact *Nowhere* is less about saw-toothed squalls than it is about Gardener and Bell’s ear for a good tune. There are the pirouetting harmonies of “Kaleidoscope”, the keening guitar figure at the start of “In A Different Place” and the glorious chimes of “Vapour Trail”. There is much to be said, too, of Loz Colbert’s fierce drumming skills – especially the intro to “Dreams Burn Down”. Expanded to 15 tracks – including the “Today Forever” EP – *Nowhere25* is accompanied by a DVD concert from the band’s March 1991 show at London’s Town And Country. Capturing the group in their floppy-fringed youth, it is a robust reminder of their early charms – though Gardener’s voice was never their strongest suit. Compared to the band’s muscular 2015 reunion shows, however, Ride’s 1991 incarnation seems endearingly guileless.

EXTRAS: None.

MICHAEL BONNER

HOW TO BUY... CAN SOLO PROJECTS Jazz, funk and dub excursions



DAMO SUZUKI & OMAR RODRÍGUEZ-LÓPEZ Please Heat This Eventually

GOLD STANDARD LABORATORIES, 2006

Since Can’s dissolution, Suzuki has been a serial collaborator. Here he is live in Cologne with The Mars Volta’s Omar Rodríguez-López and a band including former Beastie Boys keyboardist Money Mark. A fiery, broiling jazz fusion, it’s as rhythmically tempestuous as Can’s best work.

8/10

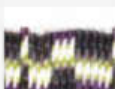


HOLGER CZUKAY Movies

ELECTROLA, 1979

The Can bassist’s first solo album is a playful delight, adding shortwave radio sampling, goofy lyrics (“Cool In The Pool”) and ethnographic flourishes (“Persian Love”) to Can’s loose funkiness. Full Can reunion on “Oh Lord, Give Us More Money”, too.

7/10



BURNT FRIEDMAN & JAKI LIEBEZEIT Secret Rhythms 2

NONPLACE, 2006

The second collaboration between Can’s drummer and electronica experimentalist Friedman offers subtle polyrhythms and ghostly sketches of cocktail jazz and dub. The highlight is “The Librarian”, with David Sylvian’s vocals drifting languidly past clarinet and vibraphone.

7/10

LOUIS PATTISON



IRMIN SCHMIDT Electro Violet

MUTE

12CD career survey from former Can keyboardist

Since the break-up of Can in 1979, Irmin Schmidt has been busy. There have been solo albums, film scores and

7/10

the job of compiling Can’s outtakes collection, *The Lost Tapes*. Can had their hippyish, whimsical qualities, but Schmidt – a student of Stockhausen who worked in musical theatre before turning to rock – has always come across as methodical, connected and thoroughly modern. Broadly, you could split *Electro Violet* down the middle – six CDs of solo music, six of soundtrack work – but as a collection, it’s both far-reaching in style and consistent in its sense of intellectual curiosity. At the unusual end, there is *Toy Planet*, a 1981 collaboration with Swiss jazz musician Bruno Spoerri that melds Jewish folk music, kosmische ambience and exploratory sax; and a bold opera written around Mervyn Peake’s *Gormenghast* that employs drum’n’bass breaks and percussion made using implements. But Schmidt’s score for Wim Wenders’ *Palermo Shooting* is a gorgeous blend of accordion and subtle electronics, while the likes of “Time The Dreamkiller” and “Roll On, Euphrates” find Schmidt rolling with two old compadres, guitarist Michael Karoli and drummer Jaki Liebezit, for playful spins on the late-period Can template.

EXTRAS: New artwork and an 80-page booklet featuring new sleeve notes from

Schmidt and music journalist Max Dax.

LOUIS PATTISON



SON VOLT Trace – 20th Anniversary Edition

RHINO

High-cotton Americana: Jay Farrar’s masterwork swells to 37 tracks with incendiary live set

9/10

Shattered at the creative

height of their eight-year evolution, alt.country visionaries Uncle Tupelo’s 1994 break-up set its principals – Jeff Tweedy and Jay Farrar – on dramatically different courses. Whereas Wilco pursued some startlingly ambitious musical paths, Son Volt delved neck-deep into the internal, blending the traditional with the emotion-racked personal. *Trace* – in part an amalgamation of fiddles, accordions, soulful harmonies and crying steel guitars – derives its musical lineage from a rich, roots heritage; lyrically, though, Farrar deviates, alternating gentle and gruff, a mix of desire and fate, hope and history, a vision of restless youth trapped in small-town Midwest America. “Tear Stained Eye”, a plaintive cut showcasing his wistful, melancholy voice, rests at *Trace*’s heart; “Learning is living/And the truth is a state of mind.” The dustbowl rhythms of “Windfall”, and “Drown”, a crashing rocker, are the two clear standouts, but everything is of a piece.

EXTRAS: A batch of newly discovered studio demos provides context, but the

stunning *Bottom Line* concert tape, mixing *Trace*, Tupelo cuts and a scorching trucker anthem, “Looking At The World Through A Windshield”, captures a surprisingly fierce stage persona, and an electrifying band.

LUKE TORN

The Specialist

Beat Happening

Beat Happening: making Nick Cave blush



BEAT HAPPENING

Look Around

DOMINO

9/10

Excellent introduction to the influential indie threesome, firm favourites of Kurt Cobain

LIKE THE VELVET UNDERGROUND in cardigans, Beat Happening combined droning melodies with wide-eyed lyrics about hot chocolate and baked Alaska. They

released five albums between 1985 and 1992, and their lo-fi, superficially cutesy approach to songwriting inspired a twee pop scene much like the US equivalent to C86. The best of their output is now collected on *Look Around*, a 23-track compilation that reveals the band were never quite as fluffy as legend dictates.

Beat Happening's founder was Calvin Johnson, who started a record label in Olympia, Washington, and then formed a band with Heather Lewis and Bret Lunsford. None could play or sing in any conventional sense, but Johnson performed with unmockable confidence, throwing his wobbly baritone at songs that drew on surf and punk, but also the teen preoccupations of the Modern Lovers and Buddy Holly, and spiced with the B-movie atmosphere of The Cramps. It's exemplified by "Bad Seeds", surfy, surly posturing that Johnson belts out at such a low tone it almost makes up for the lack of bass. Lewis would also sing, initially hesitantly, on 1985's "What's Important", but with aplomb by 1992's "Noise". She also played percussion – and in the absence of any bass, drums were a vital part of the sound – but the three members would switch instruments: many alternative bands talked about the DIY ethic, but few took it as far as Beat Happening.

That's not the only way the band stood apart. There was no hardcore macho posturing, even if Johnson's upfront peacock feyness could incite – on one occasion, a baffled Henry Rollins heckled, before grabbing Johnson by the crotch. Subsequently, they appealed to outsiders and nerds, including like-minded souls like Shonen Knife, The Pastels and The Vaselines. Kurt Cobain was a fan and it's possible to hear the kernel of anti-folk bands like The Moldy Peaches, while the local scene, of which Johnson was a prominent member, spawned Riot Grrrl. This reputation for safeness comes despite the fact that Johnson's lyrics have a sinister sexuality, sometimes not so much adolescent as pre-pubescent – the jangly "Cast A Shadow" – but often so frank they'd make Nick Cave blush ("Can't live unless I have her sin dripping down my chin," he croons on "Black Candy").

The collection unfolds chronologically, showing how little their approach changed until 1992's more expansive *You Turn Me On*, which includes Lewis' wonderful Cocteau-like "Godsend". Other highlights including essential coming-of-age lo-fi anthem "Indian Summer" and the noirish "Nancy Sin" and "Red Head Walking". A solid primer, with a full reissue programme to follow. **PETER WATTS**



SUPERGRASS

I Should Coco (reissue, 1995)

PARLOPHONE

Youthful optimism distilled in Britpop trio's remastered debut album

7/10

Of all the bands that helped kickstart Britpop, Supergrass seemed the most disposable. Formed in 1993 and comprising three teenage upstarts from Oxford, their bouncing ditties about being young and daft sounded transitory, a moment in time before reality set in and wiped the silly grins off their faces. In fact, a whole generation would sing along to the single "Alright", in which this wilfully cartoon-like threesome sang about keeping their teeth "nice and clean". *I Should Coco* would be the biggest-selling debut on Parlophone since The Beatles' *Please Please Me*. Twenty years on, these songs hardly sound fresh, but their appeal is clear: few bands captured the insouciance of youth, while paying homage to their musical heroes. "Caught By The Fuzz", in which singer Gaz Coombes recalls being nicked for cannabis possession at 15, is Buzzcocks by way of The Monkees, while "Mansize Rooster" is Madness retooled for a guitar-loving audience. This is indie-lite, certainly, but it's adrenaline-filled, sweetly delinquent indie-lite. You'd be pretty hard-hearted not to be won over by their joie de vivre.

EXTRAS: Two CDs of assorted B-sides, demos, 7/10 early sessions and live footage. Also contains a 20-page booklet with rare photos. **FIONA STURGES**



UNDERWORLD

Second Toughest In The Infants (reissue, 1996)

UNIVERSAL MUSIC CATALOGUE

Mega mega white thing! Underworld's opus, plus as much

9/10

"Born Slippy" as you can handle

Dubnobasswithmyheadman, Underworld's first album since the inspired recruitment of house DJ Darren Emerson, was the game-changer, but follow-up *Second Toughest In The Infants* is every bit as special. Essentially, it's the trio justifying their billing as "the techno Pink Floyd" on spectacular multi-part epics such as "Juanita/Kiteless/To Dream Of Love", which swoops from juddering dancefloor cacophony to wistful supplication and back. On "Banstyle" and the gripping "Pearl's Girl", additional cut and thrust is provided by drum'n'bass mores, all glistening hi-hats and perpetual-motion beats. Meanwhile, Karl Hyde's free-associating lyrical rampage through late-night London, wrecked on Red Stripe, rioja and "something wrapped in plastic", tilts at the metaphysical. Still as potent as the day it was bottled.

EXTRAS: The 2CD package features a slew of 9/10 alternate versions and non-album tracks – including the colossal "Born Slippy (NUXX)", transformed by *Trainspotting* into a No 2 hit that rather overshadowed the more sophisticated charms of *Second Toughest*.... On the ridiculously comprehensive 4CD package, "Born Slippy" gets a disc to itself, with demos and live cuts charting the track's evolution. **SAM RICHARDS**



VARIOUS ARTISTS

'Slip-Disc': Dishoom's Bombay London Grooves

DISHOOM

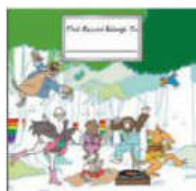
8/10

Fascinating exploration of cultural crossover in the Swinging '60s

The premise is clear: a compilation celebrating the cross-pollination of London and Bombay's pop culture in the late 1960s, when The Beatles embraced transcendental meditation and Indian youth in (what became) Mumbai soaked up Western rock 'n' roll. The execution is a little less precise, however, if only historically. The thrill of hearing Ananda Shankar's 1970 sitar-soaked "Jumpin' Jack Flash" instrumental is undercut by BB Davis & The Red Orchidstra's adaptation of the *Get Carter* theme tune, which not only ignores the film's Newcastle setting but also the version's 1999 provenance. Blossom Dearie's "I Like London In The Rain" – a crate-digger's dream though it may be – is definitely evocative of Carnaby Street's glory days, but shows no evidence of Indian influence. "Cissy Strut", meanwhile, comes from a 1996 album of "sitar funk" by Bill Ravi Harris – these days a key member of the Daptone studio team – and The Prophets. But such quibbles are ably compensated for by Henry Mancini's theme tune for a dubiously "brown-faced" Peter Sellers in 1968's *The Party*, a tremolo-heavy "Born To Be Wild" by future Asha Puthli collaborators The Savages, and Mohammed Rafi's riotously energetic "Jaan Pehechan Ho".

EXTRAS: None.

WYNDHAM WALLACE



VARIOUS ARTISTS

This Record Belongs To

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

7/10

Nursery tunes for kids of all ages

Inspired by the Little

Golden Books series and *Sesame Street*'s Grammy-winning *In Harmony* albums, this eclectic compilation is aimed at both adults and kids. It comes with a cute storybook by artist Jess Rotter, which will appeal to pre-schoolers and features five forest animals debating the purpose of a record (slightly oddly, if you have the CD version). Carole King provides the counting song "One Was Johnny" (from a 1962 Maurice Sendak book), and Harry Nilsson's narration "The Town" is like Lee Hazlewood doing *Jackanory* (a good thing), while "Me And My Arrow" suggests Nilsson's parent album *The Point* is worthy of a full revival. A child learning to count might want to bypass the jazzy digressions of The Pointer Sisters' "Pinball Number Count" (the numbers aren't all in the right order), but Roger Miller's "Oo-De-Lally" offers a playful reframing of the Robin Hood story. Mostly, the music is aimed at the childish sensibilities of grown-ups. Nina Simone's "You Can Sing A Rainbow" celebrates innocence, and Bobby Bare's father/son "Daddy What If" is delightfully mawkish. Youngsters of all ages will appreciate Kermit The Frog's "Rainbow Connection", which mixes banjo and frog harmonies.

EXTRAS: None.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

COMING NEXT MONTH...



As the end of the year alarmingly approaches, it's time for some Christmas albums next month, and so far **Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings' *It's A Holiday Soul Party*** looks like the pick of the bunch.

"White Christmas", "Silent Night" and, of course, "Funky Little Drummer Boy" are all tackled in the outfit's inimitable style.

Outside the seasonal market, **Ethan Johns** releases his third album, ***Silver Liner***, recorded live in collaboration with his backing group The Black Eyed Dogs, including BJ Cole; drone metal pioneers **Sunn O)))** return with ***Kannon***, a devastatingly heavy three-part epic; and **Jonny Greenwood** teams up with Israeli composer Shye Ben Tzur and Indian qawwali troupe The Rajasthan Express for ***Junun***.

In the world of archival releases, Neil Young's ***Bluenote Café*** chronicles Shakey's 1988 tour with the likes of Rick Rosas, Poncho Sampedro and Ben Keith. **Okkervil River** celebrate the 10th anniversary of their Tim Hardin concept album ***Black Sheep Boy*** with a deluxe version, while the past work of the newly reformed **Lush** is boxed up with rarities on ***Chorus***. Meanwhile, **Sparks'** albums for Island, including the classic ***Kimono My House***, are reissued in a vinyl boxset, ***The Island Years***, while **69 Love Songs**, **The**

Magnetic Fields' magnum opus is spruced up for re-release, notably on limited-edition coloured 10in. The perfect Christmas gift for a Stepin Merritt fan, no doubt.

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The kids are alright...



VARIOUS ARTISTS

Colours Are Brighter: Songs For Children And Grown Ups Too

ROUGH TRADE

This agreeably eclectic 2006 comp was released to aid Save The Children's education work in war-torn countries. It includes Four Tet's fine "Go Go Ninja Dinosaur", Franz Ferdinand's counting song "Jackie Jackson" and Half-Man Half Biscuit's cautionary tale about ill-fitting trainers, "David Wainwright's Feet".

7/10



CORNERSHOP

What Did The Hippie Have In His Bag?

Cornershop's back catalogue is full of child-friendly tunes (see

"Brimful Of Asha"), but this 7in is specifically aimed at children. The song is ridiculously infectious, adding a childish sense of the absurd to Tjinder Singh's beat sensibilities. Comes with a book illustrated by cover artist Nick Edwards.

8/10



VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Jungle Book

DISNEY

Aesthetes may wish to seek out the *Stay Awake* comp in which the likes of Tom Waits reinterpret Disney tunes, but you can't beat the original *Jungle Book* OST, which brought jazzy urgency to great songs like "I Wanna Be Like You" by Louis Prima.

8/10

ALASTAIR MCKAY



YES

Fragile (reissue, 1971)

PANEGYRIC

New stereo and 5.1 mixes of prog benchmark

Porcupine Tree founder Steven Wilson's mission to polish up the entire prog-rock canon reaches

8/10

one of the genre's key texts. Dazzling chops, transcendent harmonies and staggering pretension – it's all here, wrapped in a Roger Dean sleeve. Yes' second album of 1971, *Fragile* was both a creative zenith and a bit of a rush job, marking the auspicious debut of synth wizard Rick Wakeman. Each member of the band contributed a solo composition – a nobly democratic idea that might have looked less like the epitome of prog self-indulgence if the results weren't so mixed: Steve Howe's cod-flamenco effort, "Mood For A Day", is really rather pretty; Wakeman, however, contractually unable to write anything of his own, instead murdered an extract from Brahms' fourth symphony. But alongside the follies, there are triumphs: the viscous, funky strut of "Roundabout", the deft, yearning "Long Distance Runaround" and the intricate yet undeniably stirring "South Side Of The Sky".

EXTRAS: Both CD/DVD-A and CD/Blu-ray formats of the album feature six

unreleased tracks, although mostly these are just earlier or alternate takes. The exception is "All Fighters Past", a spry uptempo groover, with elements that would reappear in more ponderous form on later Yes albums. The Blu-ray includes a further three alternate takes.

SAM RICHARDS

UNCUT

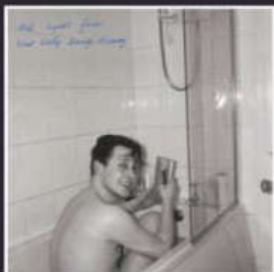
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SCORING:

10 A true classic 9 Essential 8 Excellent
7 Very good 6 Good 4-5 Mediocre 1-3 Poor

THIS MONTH: ERIC CLAPTON | JIMI HENDRIX | THE CRAMPS



"Hey Jude", September '68

English sheepdog, on the Mull Of Kintyre; Ringo and Maureen on a pair of monkey bikes in their garden; George and Patti exchanging moonstruck gazes at home in Esher; John and Yoko gliding down the steps of Tittenhurst Park in long black capes, as if on their way to a black mass. The Beatles' life together is coming apart, along with the stockbroker-belt existence that was the default domestic setting when the money started flowing in.

Very little of this selection of clips involves actual live performance ("From Me To You" at the 1963 Royal Variety Performance is among a handful of exceptions). Most of it is mimed, including a marvellous "Twist And Shout" for Granada TV's *Scene At 6.30* show in August 1963, in which the anonymous director creates the bold, high-contrast black and white iconography that would turn up three

THE BEATLES

1/1+

APPLE

The Fabs' promo films, remastered. *By Richard Williams*



9/10

significant bits of video enables us to fast-forward through evidence of the huge changes they underwent, individually and collectively, in those crowded eight years together.

The 27 short films on 1, a single CD/DVD or Blu-ray, and the further 23 on 1+, a double set, all with restored visuals and remastered sound, also invite the viewer to speculate on precisely when each member of the group was at his aesthetic peak. Any conclusions are likely to be subjective, but here are mine. George, with the advantage of the best hair and cheekbones, most perfectly incarnates the basic Beatle look early on, around the time of "A Hard Day's Night" (which appears on the single disc in the form of a performance in June 1965 at the

Palais des Sports in Paris). By May 1966, when they mime to "Rain" in the gardens of Chiswick House, Ringo has added an interesting layer of mature introspection to his lovable goofiness. John's look for the "Penny Lane" video, shot in February 1967, features the combination of droopy moustache, reefer jacket, striped college scarf and granny specs that would become de rigueur for the more intellectual types on the barricades in Paris 15 months later. Paul's full beard, worn on the Apple roof concert in January 1969, reduces the familiar winsomeness and signals his new healthy outdoor grown-up life with Linda.

The visual shifts and nuances are endlessly fascinating, as the protagonists merge and separate and reconvene in a parade of evolving preoccupations and changing loyalties. Nothing is more affecting than the promo clip for "Something" put together in October 1969, blending footage of the four couples: Paul and Linda gambolling with Martha, the celebrity Old

months later on the cover of *With The Beatles*.

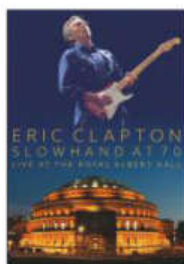
The obvious stuff includes Peter Goldmann's magnificent "Strawberry Fields Forever" film and "All You Need Is Love" from the *Our World* international telecast. The "Come Together" animation created in 2000 for the launch of thebeatles.com is one of the few duds. For capturing their essence, nothing betters the group of songs – here represented by "Day Tripper", "I Feel Fine", "We Can Work It Out", "Ticket To Ride" and "Help!" – filmed by Joe McGrath in a single day at Twickenham Studios in November 1965. As Ringo rides an exercise bike positioned where the drum kit should be and John sings while gobbling fish and chips out of a newspaper, the last pretence of fidelity to stage performance falls away, the victim of their world-changing disinclination to observe the old rules.

We can fast-forward through evidence of the huge changes they underwent in those eight years together

The colour restoration is immaculate and the audio tracks benefit immensely from new stereo mixes by Giles Martin and Sam Okell, although the 5.1 surround version is excessive: the Beatles never sounded as pristine, as glistening, as that. It's the equivalent of using the film-restoration team to make visual repairs to Paul's chipped front tooth, John's NHS fillings and George's decaying molars, which feature in the early clips

and, when exposed on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, must have contributed significantly to the average American's scornful view of British dentistry.

EXTRAS: 1 comes with audio commentary and 7/10 filmed introductions by Paul and Ringo. 1+ additionally features a 124-page hardback book.



ERIC CLAPTON Slowhand At 70 - Live At The Royal Albert Hall

EAGLE VISION

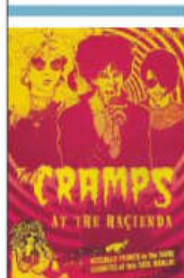
Landmark gig from
May 2015, also out in
2CD format

Recorded at his favourite
haunt in celebration of
his 70th birthday, and
50 years since first playing
the Royal Albert Hall

6/10

with The Yardbirds, Clapton looks trim as
he navigates a pretty safe route through his
catalogue, ably assisted by Paul Carrack,
Andy Fairweather Low and more: "Cocaine",
"Wonderful Tonight" and "I Shot The Sheriff"
included. Hats off, though, to a delicate, electro-
acoustic "Layla", recast as a soul-stricken
ballad, and quakingly good versions of
"Crossroads" and "High Time We Went".

EXTRAS: A 17-minute "Little Queen Of Spades".
5/10 **ROB HUGHES**



THE CRAMPS At The Hacienda

SAVOY

Voodoo idols rip up
1984 Manchester

There are relatively
few complete video
documents of The
Cramps in their live
pomp, so this gets eight
stars just for existing.
Shot in sharp lo-fi (one
VHS camera, "glorious

9/10

mono") at Factory's sweating concrete cavern
in its pre-E goth days, Lux and Ivy tear
through a set heavy on *Smell Of Female* and
chewing gum. The pace is set early when Lux
destroys the stage's low ceiling; swampy
crowd-surfing to music from heaven on a
Saturday night ensues. One star off because
we can't see eternal drummer Nick Knox,
but you can't have everything.

EXTRAS: None.
DAMIEN LOVE



A NEW LEAF

EUREKA

Way overdue UK
debut for Elaine May's
screwball black comedy

It's been infuriatingly
difficult to see Elaine May's
early films here, but more
releases like this should
prompt a reconsideration
of this drastically
underappreciated genius.
After being half of

8/10

America's hippest comedy act (with Mike
Nichols), she made her directing-writing
debut with this bright, dark, mad 1971 comedy.
Walter Matthau (amazing) stars as a spoiled,
scheming playboy on his uppers who plans to
marry May's shy, shlubby botanist for her cash,
then get rid of her. Suffice to say Wes Anderson
saw this, but it's harsher than he gets. And
hilarious. Please, someone: a decent edition
of May's *Myki And Nicky* next.

EXTRAS: tbc.
DAMIEN LOVE

JIMI HENDRIX Electric Church

SONY LEGACY

Unseen portrait, drawn from
the Atlanta Pop Festival, 1970



8/10

'ELECTRIC CHURCH' WAS
one of the notional post-
Experience formulations
(see also: Gypsy, Sun And
Rainbows) that Jimi Hendrix
imagined for his music after
the demise of the original
Experience. In truth, his
grandier ideas of musical
freedom went chiefly
undeveloped as the artist
was kept on the road,
shackled to something like
a version of his original trio.

In such a context, Hendrix's engagement at the
second Atlanta Pop Festival on July 4, 1970,
initially feels as if it may be unpromising material
from which to draw a live album and doc. Sure
enough, the film bears the shonky imprimatur of the Experience Hendrix organisation: directed by collector/
archivist John McDermott and beginning with an unintentionally psychedelic appraisal of Hendrix's genius
from persons living and dead, all presented with no context or attribution. However, from then on, the film
shows its working in a more candid way. In 1970, Steve Rash (who went on to direct *The Buddy Holly Story*) shot
Atlanta Pop, but never processed his material until he began working on his own documentary about it a few
years ago. Due largely to Rash's footage, this film now accesses something like an unheard Hendrix story.

Byron, Georgia (actually 100 miles outside Atlanta) was not a place where African-Americans like Hendrix
had historically had reason to feel welcome. A representative local citizen of the period was Lester Maddox,
owner of a restaurant called The Pickrick, which he vowed to keep segregated by any means he could. By
the time of Hendrix's visit to the state, Maddox was governor. It's clearly the intention of *Electric Church*
to develop the idea of Hendrix as Jesse Owens in a Deep South version of the 1936 Olympics. Appealing as that
notion may be as footage of Maddox stacks up, the film is at its freshest with material it generates itself. Via
present-day interviews with promoter Alex Cooley, musicians who played, and particularly with Byron
residents who recall the event, what emerges is an extremely entertaining picture of a region bemused by
the counterculture, which it had never before witnessed. In so doing, what began as padding to live footage
becomes a more subtle portrait of commerce and moral outrage than anyone might have expected.

Though near death, in performance, Hendrix himself is very much alive. The versions of "All Along
The Watchtower", "Purple Haze" and "Stone Free" in particular find new paths through familiar terrain.
It's revealing also of Hendrix's sensitivity to his band's limitations - while Mitch Mitchell could be as
freewheeling as the guitarist, the more doughty Billy Cox couldn't hope to follow him - rendering the
performance improvisational but never distractingly digressive. Here, on the tightrope between pop and
searching experiment, was where Hendrix was at his most thrilling.

EXTRAS: tbc.
JOHN ROBINSON



GRACE OF MY HEART

ODYSSEY

Loving recreation of the
Goffin-King glory years

Possibly on the back of *Love
And Mercy*, the first UK DVD
release for Allison Anders'
sweet, soulful, strangely
overlooked 1996 quasi-
musical, a loving-critical
feminist re-creation
of the Brill Building era,

8/10

loosely based on Carole King's experiences.
Spanning times changin' from the 1950s to the
late-1960s, it stars Illeana Douglas, who is
terrific as the singer turned writer at the New
York hit factory, who moves from girl-group pop
to soulful singer-songwriter, despite the men in
her life and in her way, including Matt Dillon's
Wilsonesque surf-genius. The fine pastiche
soundtrack is dominated by Elvis Costello and
Burt Bacharach's "God Give Me Strength".

EXTRAS: None.
DAMIEN LOVE



MANGLEHORN

CURZON

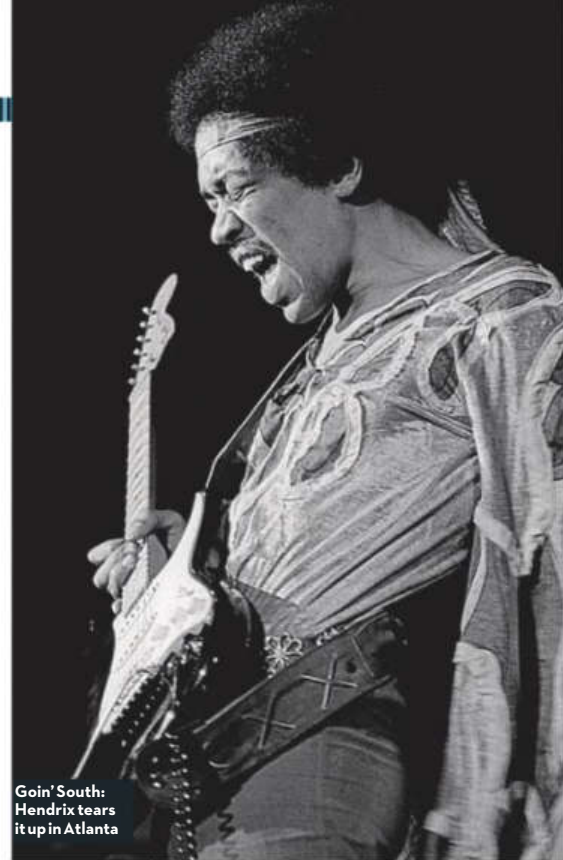
Pacino misplaces
key to happiness
in oddball drama

There are bewildering
moments in David
Gordon Green's dreamy
study of loneliness and
isolation, not least the
film's reliance on a mime
artist to deliver a note of
optimism. (And look out

7/10

for a peculiar scene involving watermelons.)
But mostly, it works, thanks to a resolutely
downbeat performance by Al Pacino as a
solitary Austin locksmith, drifting in and
out of fantasy as he bemoans a lost love
and spurns chances to get happy with
Holly Hunter (a sympathetic bank teller).
Fortunately, when Pacino moans, "I got no
Fanny for about a week," he's talking about
his sick cat.

EXTRAS: None.
ALASTAIR MCKAY



Goin' South:
Hendrix tears
it up in Atlanta

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**NEED ANY BACK ISSUES?
SEE PAGE XX**

Films

BY DAMON WISE

This month: redemption for Johnny Depp, the resurrection of Steve Jobs, the inside track on Steve McQueen's Le Mans, and two taboo-busting love stories

AS HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS continue their obsession with mining known quantities, from literary and video-game adaptations to franchises, reboots and remakes, it becomes clear in the run-up to awards season that one previous staple is falling out of favour: the star vehicle. In recent years, once-bankable names have been bloodied at the box office, none more publicly than Johnny Depp, whose fall from grace began with 2013's *The Lone Ranger* and culminated with the double whammy this year of the unfunny spy romp *Mortdecai* and the unreleased (and possibly unreleasable) Martin Amis adaptation, *London Fields*. Quite what went wrong for Depp is redressed in Scott Cooper's crime drama **Black Mass**, set in Boston's depressed South Side during the mid-'70s and '80s. Here, Depp, for possibly the first time since *Donnie Brasco*, shows what he can actually do as an actor, dispensing with all the clowning and caricature that seemed to become his stock while dashing between the sets of *Pirates Of The Caribbean* and the latest of Tim Burton's overdressed gothic whimsies. Talk of Oscars may be premature, and it does indulge Depp's tendency to let his outfits do half the work for him, but it's fair to say that it's his best performance in years.

Based on a disturbing true story, *Black Mass* stars Depp as Jimmy "Whitey" Bulger, a small-time racketeer who rose from being a petty annoyance to citywide crime boss. It may sound familiar, and Cooper can't resist adding some irritating Scorsese-derived flourishes in his camerawork and score, but what lifts the film from the usual array of gangster movies is the script's attention to the mechanics of Bulger's reign. Recruited to the FBI by a childhood friend (the excellent Joel Edgerton), Bulger manipulates his handlers into becoming his muscle, seeing off the mafia and allowing him to operate in plain sight. There are scenes that scream "For Your Consideration", notably a sinister and quite convincing dinner-table speech that nods to Joe



Forbidden love: Cate Blanchett as Carol, with Rooney Mara

Pesci's famous "Funny how?" scene in *GoodFellas*, but there's plenty here to suggest that Depp is by no means a spent force.

► **Steve Jobs**, Danny Boyle's vibrant biopic of the Apple guru and digital dilettante, is a more traditional star vehicle, though it could be argued that the star isn't so much its leading man, Michael Fassbender, as its scriptwriter, Aaron Sorkin. Boyle certainly plays second fiddle here; though he brings a light touch and some technical sleight of hand to an often static, talky movie, this is recognisably Sorkin's baby, a precise, contained and tightly structured piece of work that, with a minimum of tinkering, could easily be adapted for the theatre.

In a wholly unconventional move for a biopic, *Steve Job* dispenses with the usual trimmings to present three real-time segments of its subject's life. The first act takes place in California in 1984, where Jobs is unveiling the first-ever Macintosh to an audience of excitable tech geeks and nervous board members. The second act takes place in San Francisco four years later, where Jobs is launching his first bona-fide business disaster, something he calls 'the black cube'. For the third act, Jobs returns to the same city 10 years later with his new product, the iMac,

each section marking a new chapter in the designer's fluctuating favour within the company that, before his death from cancer in 2011, aged 56, he would make his own.

As Jobs, Fassbender is pretty impressive, since, apart from a couple of flashbacks, he's bound by the constraints of Sorkin's say-don't-show script. Through his relationship with mentor and father figure John Sculley (Jeff Daniels) we learn a lot about Jobs' insecurities and abandonment issues, which play out in his dysfunctional relationship with his ex-wife and daughter. Nevertheless, it's often a hard movie to enjoy, as Sorkin's obsession with the minutiae of the business (a recurring topic is a boring argument about the invention of the Apple II) and his predilection for awkward conversations in public places often result in scenes that seem more impressive and dramatic than they really are.

► Although it stars Cate Blanchett as a woman named **Carol**, Todd Haynes' latest period drama is actually a two-hander. Like his 2011 mini-series *Mildred Pierce*, taken from the novel by James M Cain, it is an adaptation of a non-genre work by a famous crime writer, in this case Patricia Highsmith, who first published it as *The Price Of Salt* under the pseudonym Claire

Reviewed this month...



BLACK MASS

Director
Scott Cooper
Starring Johnny Depp, Joel Edgerton, Peter Sarsgaard
Opens
November 27
Cert 15
7/10



STEVE JOBS

Director
Danny Boyle
Starring Michael Fassbender, Kate Winslet, Seth Rogen
Opens
November 13
Cert 15
7/10



CAROL

Director
Todd Haynes
Starring Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Kyle Chandler
Opens
November 27
Cert 15
9/10



STEVE MCQUEEN: THE MAN & LE MANS

Directors Gabriel Clarke and John McKenna
Opens
November 20
Cert 15
8/10



LOVE

Director
Gaspar Noé
Starring
Karl Glusman, Aomi Muyock, Klara Kristin
Opens
November 20
Cert 18
6/10



Morgan in 1952. The reason for this reticence – her debut novel, *Strangers On A Train*, had given Alfred Hitchcock a hit movie – is that Highsmith's semi-autobiographical story involved a lesbian romance between a shopgirl and a well-to-do housewife.

Haynes has visited the '50s before – in 2002's *Far From Heaven*, which also featured a same-sex love affair – but this is an altogether different beast. Where *Far From Heaven* riffed on the gorgeous Technicolor melodramas of Douglas Sirk, *Carol* is a much more subtle affair, filmed on Super-16mm to capture the grain of American life just before the boom years of Eisenhower's presidency. A closer comparison would be David Lean's *Brief Encounter*, since this, too, is the story of a seemingly impossible love, as part-time photographer and shop worker Therese (Rooney Mara) is reeled in by the worldly Carol.

As he proved with *Cain*, Haynes handles this kind of material beautifully; though *Carol* is nominally a love story, Haynes and screenwriter Phyllis Nagy take on board Highsmith's work as a thriller writer, which gives the two women a fugitive quality: here, love is the crime. Unusually, though, neither are victims. Haynes doesn't dwell on the era as a time of oppression, but portrays a time when the first seeds of sexual freedom began to be sown. The result is an elegant, intoxicating drama that stands out by a long margin as one of the year's best.

► The heyday of star wattage is explored in British documentary **Steve McQueen: The Man And Le Mans**, which spotlights the late

star's passion for fast cars and Formula One racing in particular. Although focusing on a brief period in the late '60s, the film covers a surprising amount of ground, illuminating his childhood, personal life and premature death.

The main concern is McQueen's attempt to make *Le Mans*, a film that would capture the visceral thrill of motor racing. As the actor intended it, *Le Mans* would have been the first hybrid doc, with the actor both playing a role and participating in the actual race. Being arguably the most famous Hollywood actor in the world put paid to that, however. Insurance issues kept McQueen in the pits, the first of a series of setbacks that ensured the film would flop.

As a study of hubris, Gabriel Clarke and John McKenna's film is entertaining enough, filled with fascinating revelations about the troubled production, beginning with a near-fatal car crash that was kept secret for years. But the intent is not to take down the star, more to reveal how his ego got in the way of a truly groundbreaking project. McQueen's determination did yield its rewards, as evidenced in the breathtaking 600 hours of first-person race footage that the filmmakers uncovered, tucked away under a California sound stage. Similarly, the film's soundtrack was a masterpiece of sound design, compiled from authentic F1 engine noise to create a heady and immersive experience. It's a testament to the filmmakers' integrity that the result doesn't invite us to revel in McQueen's comeuppance but makes us want to see *Le Mans* immediately.

► The films of Gaspar Noé aren't exactly known for their marquee-name casts, although it's worth noting that his new film, **Love**, was originally meant to go into production 14 years ago, with Euro power couple Vincent Cassel and Monica Bellucci. When both balked at the script's explicit sexual content, Noé used the money to fund his rape-revenge drama *Irréversible*, which sealed his reputation as world cinema's foremost

provocateur. On reflection, with its anything-goes sex scenes involving threesomes, fetish clubs and transsexual hookers, it's hard to imagine any actor with a reputation signing up for a project like this. But *Love* is a strangely unthreatening film, a coming-of-age – and a coming of other things – story that is by no means as shocking as it

promises to be. Shot in 3-D, an effect that Noé uses with surprising decorum, *Love* is the story of Murphy (Karl Glusman), a film student who becomes fixated on an ex-girlfriend after accidentally becoming a parent.

Using Noé's trademark flashback structure, the film explains how Murphy came to be where he is, a story littered with hardcore sexual encounters. The sex itself is well choreographed, especially a scene scored to Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain*. Glusman, sadly, rather lets it all down. In a world where even the worst actors are pretty average these days, one can only imagine that the ever-perverse Noé was actively looking for the opposite of talent in his search for a star.

Haynes portrays a time when the first seeds of sexual freedom began to be sown

Also out...

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OPENS NOVEMBER 6

Fifties-set drama, with Saoirse Ronan torn between two men and two countries. Nick Hornby writes.

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OPENS NOVEMBER 6

Bradley Cooper is an uppity chef who gets his comeuppance and then tries to redeem himself by opening a top restaurant.

KILL YOUR FRIENDS

OPENS NOVEMBER 6

Adaptation of John Niven's comic novel about murder and drugs in the music industry during the Britpop era.

Kill Your Friends



THE HALLOW

OPENS NOVEMBER 13

British horror about a family fighting against demonic spirits in a remote part of Ireland.

TANGERINE

OPENS NOVEMBER 13

Filmed entirely on iPhones, this experimental drama follows a transgender sex worker hunting down her pimp in LA.

THE LADY IN THE VAN

OPENS NOVEMBER 13

Alan Bennett writes, Maggie Smith stars. A transient woman lives in her car at the end of Bennett's drive.

THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART 2

OPENS NOVEMBER 19

The final part of the dystopian teen drama; and Philip Seymour Hoffman's final screen appearance.

REVENGE OF THE MEKONS

OPENS NOVEMBER 21

Doc about the long-standing punk band, featuring input from Jonathan Franzen, Greil Marcus and Craig Finn.

BRIDGE OF SPIES

OPENS NOVEMBER 27

Tom Hanks leads Spielberg's latest as a Cold War-era lawyer recruited by the CIA. Mark Rylance co-stars as a Russian.

UNBRANDED

OPENS NOVEMBER 27

Four Texans hatch a plot to adopt, train, and ride wild mustangs 3,000 miles from the Mexican border to Canada.

Live

ROCKING IN THE FREE WORLD

Sound and vision:
PJ Harvey with Seamus
Murphy backdrop

PJ HARVEY & SEAMUS MURPHY

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON, OCTOBER 9, 2015

When is a gig not a gig? Great songs, though

TONIGHT'S WORLD PREMIERE of PJ Harvey's latest work, *The Hollow Of The Hand*, is an exciting, occasionally electrifying, 30-minute rock'n'roll show – which, unfortunately, is doled out in small and sporadic morsels over the course of two and a quarter hours otherwise consumed by often less gripping poetry recitals, and what is essentially a slide show. *The Hollow Of The Hand* is a collaboration between Harvey and the photographer/filmmaker Seamus Murphy – a book chronicling, in her poems and his pictures, recent journeys undertaken by the pair to Kosovo, Afghanistan and the United States. As an artefact, it works fine. There's no reason why it wouldn't – Harvey is a great writer, Murphy a superb photographer. As an evening's entertainment – and there's a feeling that

proceedings have loftier ambitions than mere "entertainment", which is part of the problem – it feels frustratingly like a work in progress.

The compere for the first of two nights at Royal Festival Hall is Anthony Loyd, a veteran foreign correspondent who knows well the milieus that have inspired this project, and who has also worked abroad frequently with Murphy (tomorrow night's MC is American journalist and poet Eliza Griswold, another Murphy collaborator.) Loyd begins what he describes as "this most special of book launches" by explaining what we're strapped in for.

It will be a presentation in three parts, one for each location: Kosovo, Afghanistan, Washington DC. Each of these chapters will comprise a short film by Murphy, a showing of still photos by Murphy with commentary by Murphy and Loyd, then poetry readings and new

songs by Harvey – whose birthday it is today.

The immediate upshot of this is that momentum is a while in building, as Harvey (along with her accompanists, longterm musical partner John Parish and James Johnston of Gallon Drunk and the Bad Seeds) sits silently on a dark stage for the first 20-odd minutes, during the screening of the "Kosovo" film and subsequent discussion of Murphy's pictures of the country. The film, projected on a screen overhanging the stage, is not narrated, and indeed broadcasts no discernible narrative, but is – inevitably – beautiful (Murphy's affinity with Harvey's work has been previously demonstrated by his short films inspired by her 2011 masterpiece, *Let England Shake*.) So too are the photographs, shown on the same screen, gathered by Murphy over visits to the Balkans dating back to the '90s, depicting conflict in its banality (a couple pausing their flight for their lives to argue at a railway station), its horror (the purple-green bound hands of a massacre victim) and surreal comedy (a cow grazing in a ransacked delicatessen.) The conversation between Loyd and Murphy, slouched on a couch on the right hand side of the stage, is interesting enough, but remote in this large venue. It feels a bit like an extra chapter on the DVD, the kind of thing you might get around to watching after enjoying the main event.



Harvey, whose white jacket is the only exception to the monochrome gloom of the stage set, begins her contribution by reading a poem about a semi-derelict village in Kosovo, its streets bombarded with over-ripened plums – an image also captured by Murphy's opening film. This is followed by the night's first song, "Chain Of Keys", and it's great – one of Harvey's snarling blues laments, over a martial snare. She returns to the lectern for another poem, "Dance On The Mountain", also recalling a moment from the film, and then there's another song, "The Wheel", and it's even better than the first, Harvey and Johnston playing electric guitars, Parish on a resonator, recalling both the elegant furies of the *Let England Shake* material and the punky righteousness of Harvey's still-astonishing debut album.

The Afghanistan section begins with another short film, including footage of foreign soldiers and locals ignoring each other, a surveillance dirigible bobbing over an ancient fortress, a hooded Harvey watchful among the chanting congregation of a Sufi mosque. The photography discussion between Loyd and Murphy is a little livelier here, partly because Afghanistan is a better-looking country than Kosovo – Afghanistan is a better-looking country than most – and partly because Loyd permits some humour to intrude, asking Murphy about the

SET LIST

KOSOVO

- 1 On A Dirt Road (poem)
- 2 The Abandoned Village (poem)
- 3 Chain Of Keys (song)
- 4 Dance On The Mountain (poem)
- 5 Where It Begins (poem)
- 6 The Wheel (song)

AFGHANISTAN

- 7 The Orange Monkey (song)
- 8 The Guest Room (poem)
- 9 Adhan (poem)

10 The Hand (poem)

- 11 The Ministry Of Social Affairs (song)
- 12 An Initiation (poem)
- 13 The Boy (poem)
- 14 Charikar (poem)
- 15 The Glass (poem)
- 16 Dollar Dollar (song)
- 17 Poem (poem)
- 18 Dead Tanks (poem)
- 19 The First Shot (poem)
- 20 Begging Bowl (poem)
- 21 Talking To Dog (poem)
- 22 At The Airbase (poem)

WASHINGTON, DC

- 23 The Community Of Hope (song)
- 24 To The Oldest Homo Sapiens (poem)
- 25 Homo Sappy Blues (song)
- 26 On The Corner Of 1st And D (poem)
- 27 3am Washington, DC (poem)
- 28 Medicinals (song)
- 29 Near The Memorials To Vietnam And Lincoln (song)
- 30 Two Cemeteries (poem)
- 31 Anacostia (poem)
- 32 River Anacostia (song)

logistics and concerns of taking, as he puts it, "a cherished English legend" to a war zone.

Harvey's terse, descriptive poems in this section don't quite land, possibly a hazard of trying to distil reactions to a place as raw and overwhelming as Afghanistan into so few words. Some are just banal, not least "The Hand", an aghast description of a beggar being ignored by

passers-by – a spectacle as readily available a two-minute walk from this venue, on the Golden Jubilee bridges to Embankment. The songs, however, are instantly arresting. The swaggering, seething "Ministry Of Social Affairs" borrows from early versions of "Let England Shake" (the song) the trick of using an ancient sample as a springboard, in this case substituting Jerry McCain & His Upstarts' "That's What They Want" for The Four Lads' "Istanbul (Not Constantinople)". "Dollar Dollar" is effectively illustrated by the deployment of some of Murphy's photographs as backdrop.

It's hard not to think that combining the audio and visual like this might have been a wiser approach throughout: a noticeable proportion of the audience use the arrival of the night's third photo discussion as an opportunity for a rest stop. Again, there is no quibbling with Murphy's extraordinary gift for the snapshot of the everyday, which somehow tells a much bigger story – but they're pictures that are (or would be) much better appreciated at the viewer's own speed. The poems, again, pale against the songs, though the latter encourage considerable hope for the next PJ Harvey album (critically, some of these songs featured during the Recording In Progress project at Somerset House earlier this year). "Homo Sappy Blues", "Community Of Hope" and "Medicinals" are spiky, witty, Breeders-ish rackets, "Near The

Memorials To Vietnam And Lincoln" a demented sea-shanty anchored by Parish's accordion.

There are no encores – and no calls for one audible in a mostly standing ovation. At the end, the question vis-à-vis the point of it all remains open, as was doubtless the intention. *Let England Shake* was an examination of conflict much the more resonant for Harvey's insistence

Proceedings have loftier ambitions than mere "entertainment", which is part of the problem

on rising above, or at least operating sideways to, the traditional rock-singer fatuities about the goodness of peace and the badness of war. Where *The Hollow Of The Hand* is concerned, her commendable decision to go and take a closer look seems to have confirmed her suspicions that there's more to it than that. One of the poems inspired by Afghanistan, and the fondness

of its people for such combative recreations as quail-fighting, kite-duelling and the rumbustious local variant of polo, in which a decapitated goat is used as a ball, observes, "*There must be something in the air/There is fighting everywhere*": any survey of British history, or of an English provincial high street at closing time, might prompt the same conclusion about her homeland. War, like trying to understand war, is just something that we seem to do.

ANDREW MUELLER

Harvey with Gallon Drunk's James Johnston





STEVIE WONDER

AIR CANADA CENTRE, TORONTO, OCTOBER 9, 2015

The soul legend retools *Songs In The Key Of Life* – and reminds the world why he is as relevant today as he ever was

AS BENEFICIAL AS the trend has been for veterans of the music world, the classic-album live set is not where anyone goes looking for wild bursts of spontaneity and creativity. Such things would seem to be antithetical to more common objectives, like burnishing reputations, monetising nostalgia and uniting performers and spectators in a ritual of mutual self-congratulation.

Stevie Wonder has other ideas about what ought to happen when an artist revisits a high-water mark for a paying audience. Sure, over the course of his three-hour concert in Toronto, he makes good on the title of the *Songs In The Key Of Life* Tour by performing the 21 tracks originally spread over the two LPs and bonus EP of his 1976 Grammy-winner.

But there's none of the finicky cautiousness or whiff of resentment that can afflict these studious onstage re-creations of past triumphs. Instead, the indefatigably energetic 65-year-old delights in confounding those expectations with detours, digressions and impromptu decisions, a few of which wrong-foot the very well-drilled members of his 30-strong ensemble of singers and players.

As per the original order, "Pastime Paradise" does eventually follow "Knocks Me Off My Feet". But that doesn't occur until Wonder has dedicated the better part of an hour to a majestic rendition of The O'Jays' "Family Reunion", a spry duet with keyboardist Greg Phillinganes – one of several musicians onstage whose tenure dates back to Wonder's golden decade – and a mischievous sing-off with his six backup vocalists. Later,

Wonder performs with an intensity that the past four decades have done little to dim

"Easy Goin' Evening", *Songs'* jazziest excursion, eases effortlessly into a medley with "Take the 'A' Train".

And just as listeners begin readying themselves for the ecstatic finale of "As" and "Another Star", Wonder pauses to mark the 75th anniversary of John Lennon's birth with the least hokey cover of "Imagine" ever performed on this planet. Wonder's

almost too overcome by emotion to finish the song – when it's over, he has to lift his sunglasses to daub away the tears. Awe is the only sensible reaction.

Even if there's no new music in the repertoire – possibly because the popularity of the twice-extended tour has delayed the arrival of the three albums that Wonder reportedly has ready for release – the man makes it all feel entirely of the present.

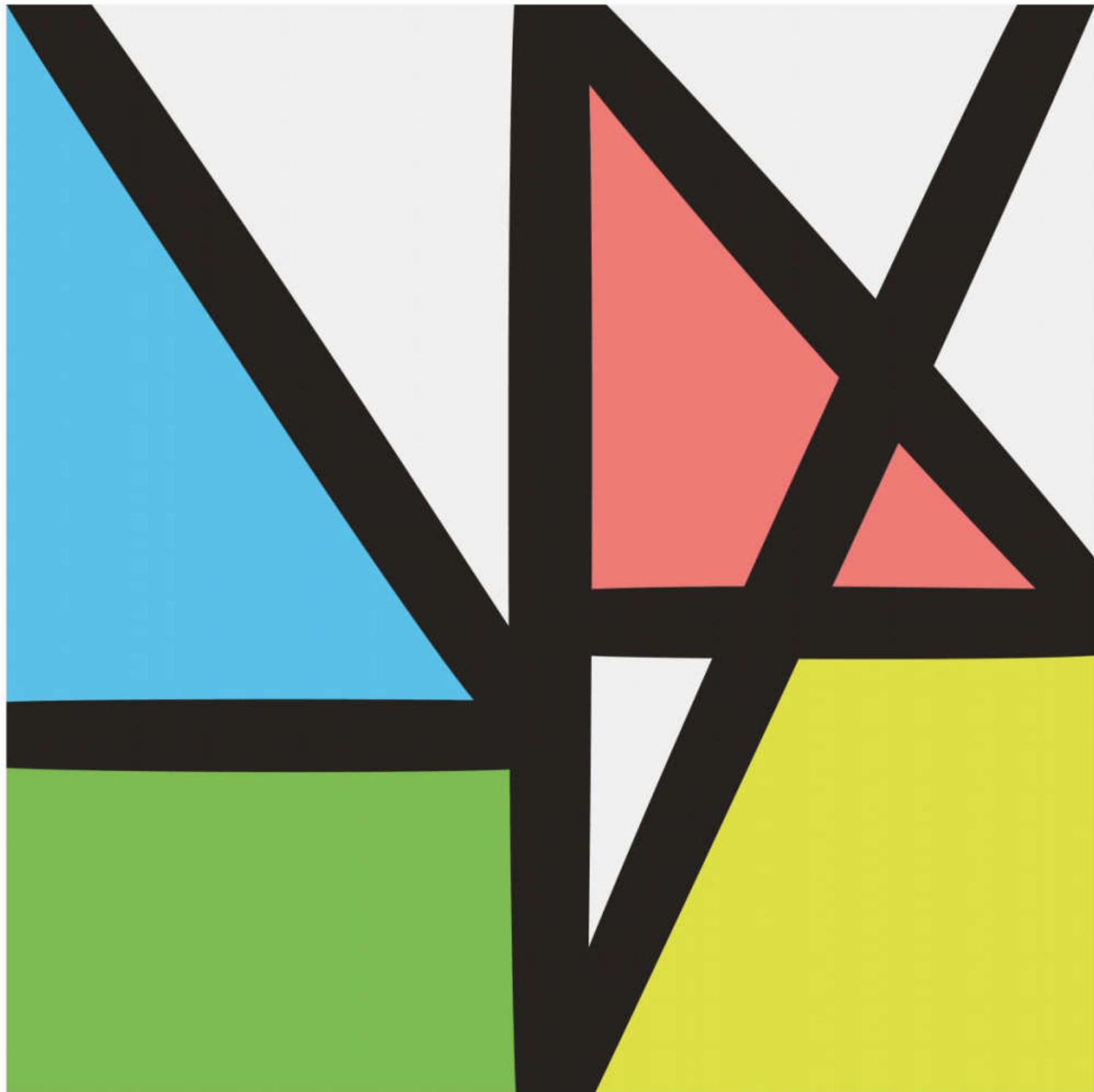
What's more, Wonder's approach to this music has been anything but static judging by the subtle evolution of the set since he first brought the *Songs* Tour to the Air Canada Centre one year before. Again, the album's most cherished songs – "Sir Duke", "I Wish", "Isn't She Lovely" – are the quickest to get the audience on their feet. Yet two less famous cuts now possess the most force. Besides demonstrating Wonder's staggering command of melody and rhythm, "Ordinary Pain" and "Black Man" best epitomise the competing strains of joy and anguish that run through his greatest work. Shifting between a Yamaha piano and a Vintage Vibe Vibanet whose case sparkles even more brightly than the glitter on his blue Nehru jacket, Wonder performs with an intensity that the past four decades have done little to dim.

SET LIST

- 1 Love's In Need Of Love Today
- 2 Have A Talk With God
- 3 Village Ghetto Land
- 4 Contusion
- 5 Sir Duke
- 6 I Wish
- 7 Knocks Me Off My Feet
- 8 Family Reunion
- 9 Besame Mucho/Night Time Is The Right Time/Who's Loving You/Hold On
- 10 Pastime Paradise
- 11 Summer Soft
- 12 Ordinary Pain
- 13 Saturn
- 14 Ebony Eyes
- 15 Isn't She Lovely
- 16 Joy Inside My Tears
- 17 Black Man
- 18 All Day Sucker
- 19 Easy Goin' Evening
- 20 Canadian Sunset / Take The 'A' Train
- 21 Ngiculela - Es Una Historia - I Am Singing
- 22 Imagine
- 23 If It's Magic
- 24 As
- 25 Another Star
- ENCORE
- 26 DJ Tick Tick Boom (medley)
- 27 Do I Do
- 28 I Just Called To Say I Love You (verse)
- 29 Superstition

Weirdly, there are moments when he almost seems younger than his *Key Of Life* self. Just consider Wonder's display of schoolboy glee during the encore as he assumes the guise of DJ Tick Tick Boom and works the party with snippets of "Can't Feel My Face" and "Uptown Funk".

Though it caps off a show that expands the parameters of the classic-album set as far as they can go, a rapturously funky and ridiculously tight "Superstition" raises the hope that Wonder might consider a *Talking Book* tour, too. Surely his present-day projects can wait a little longer if his past is this restless. JASON ANDERSON



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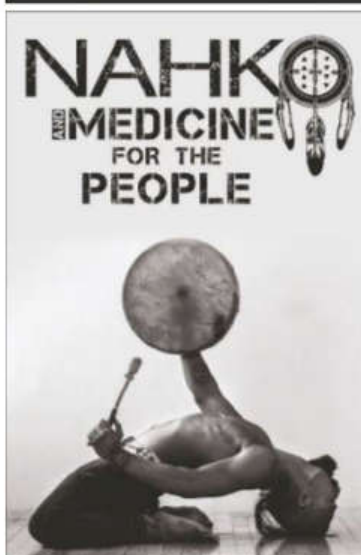
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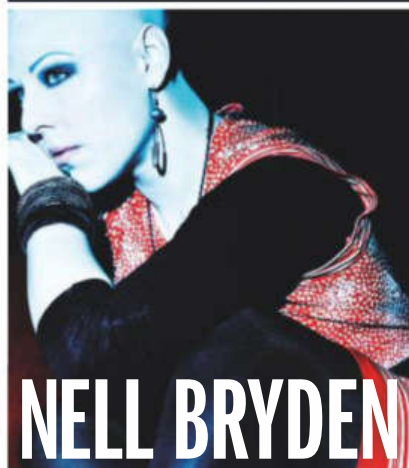
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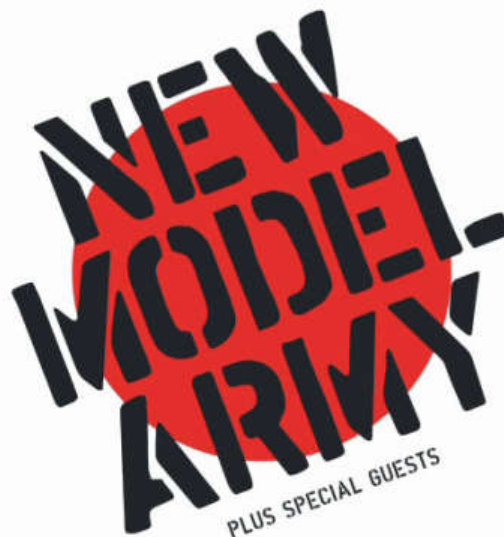
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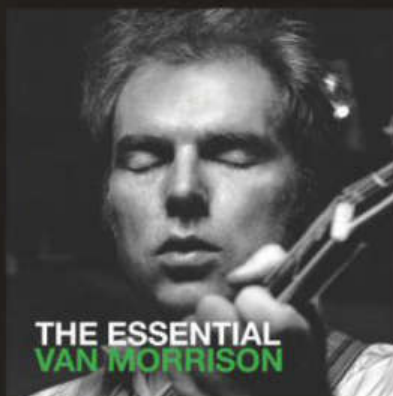
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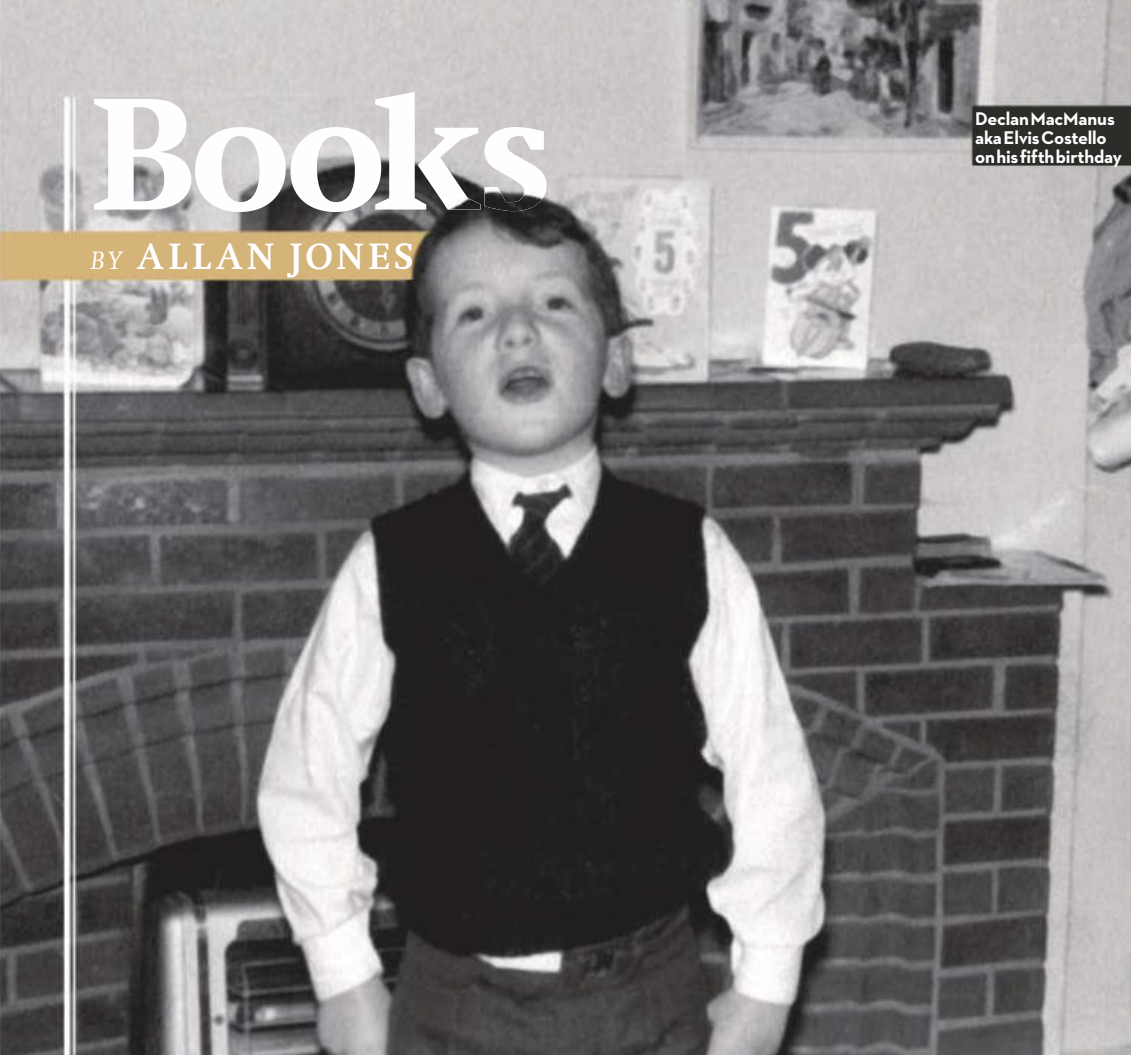
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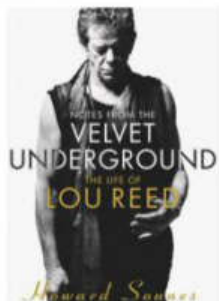
Declan MacManus
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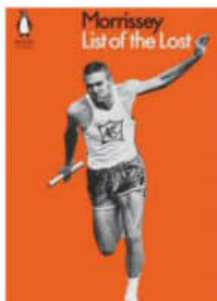
Reviewed this month...



Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink
Elvis Costello
VIKING
9/10



Notes From The Velvet Underground
Howard Sounes
DOUBLEDAY
7/10



List Of The Lost
Morrissey
PENGUIN
2/10

ELVIS COSTELLO WAS always a gas to interview because he had opinions about everything, all of them worth listening to. He'd had an initially spiky relationship with the press, with whom he was often at best terse, and otherwise a lot worse. But by 1989 when I interviewed him in Dublin, just after *Spike* came out, there was no shutting him up, or any want to. He was a wonderful raconteur. Stories about Dylan, Springsteen, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Bowie, Paul McCartney, Nick Lowe and more poured out of him as fast as the drinks that fuelled us through those four or five hours kept arriving from the hotel bar.

A lot of them are handsomely repeated in **Unfaithful Music & Disappearing Ink**, a vast memoir

that across 600 pages looks back at his life and career with candour, humour and a welcome lack of rancour. There are moments of pique, mostly to do with his not selling records any more, although this has been the case for years. But mostly the book is generous, and you could heat a village with the warmth of his writing about his family, especially his father, the raffish entertainer Ross MacManus, a ladies' man in whose philandering Costello sees an anticipation of his own multiple infidelities, which he doesn't half go on about.

Abandoning linear narrative like a more garrulous version of Dylan's *Chronicles*, *Unfaithful Music* continually intercuts scenes from a childhood in London and Liverpool with The Attractions in the studio. There's a hilarious account of his time

at the Elizabeth Arden perfume factory in Acton, and even funnier accounts of his first forays into folk clubs. Then he's a small boy listening to acetates of Beatles songs with his father, who'd been sent them to learn for later performance with the popular Joe Loss Orchestra. Now he's struggling to get his music heard, now recalling idyllic Merseyside summers before a series of vivid accounts of nightmarish American tours, a blur of girls, gigs and drugs.

Music holds the disparate narrative strands together, usually his own songs the link. Discussion of "Another King's Shilling" and "American Without Tears" leads into a fabulous family and history, mostly centred on his grandfather Pat, a bandsman on transatlantic liners between Liverpool and New York. "The Birds Will Still Be Singing", that gorgeous lament from *The Juliet Letters*, frames a moving account of his father's death from Parkinson's-induced dementia. Costello doesn't flinch from much here. Even Bebe Buell gets a tense mention. Most painful of all, he has to confront again the notorious drunken row in a Midwest motel with Stephen Stills and Bonnie Bramlett (whose name he can't bring himself to mention) when, to provoke them, he said such despicable things about Ray Charles and James Brown that a vindictive American press branded him a racist, an incident that still haunts him.

► Howard Sounes' **Notes From The Velvet Underground: The Life Of Lou Reed** is sober, calm, reasonable, measured, predictable.

Lou, of course, was none of these things. As Sounes at every opportunity happily reminds us, Lou for a great part of his life was a self-destructive, drug-addled boozier with a vicious tongue, an arrogant egomaniac, disloyal, conniving, a bully, angry, bitter and manic, even on a good day. This is hardly breaking news. But then *Notes From The Velvet Underground* doesn't really have much to say about Lou that others haven't said before, despite the 140 fresh interviews Sounes claims he conducted during his research, which sadly doesn't include original comment from either John Cale or Lou's widow, Laurie Anderson.

Sounes also wrote *Down The Highway: The Life Of Bob Dylan*, which is a good book to go to if all you want to know about Dylan is who he's been married to, but noticeably less enlightening about Dylan's music. VU fans, for whom songs like "Heroin", "Sister Ray", "Pale Blue Eyes", "Sweet Jane", "The Bed", "Coney Island Baby" and "Junior Dad" are a better reason for remembering Lou than his taste for methamphetamines, transsexuals and ill-fitting leather trousers, may feel similarly that when it comes to Lou's music, *Notes From The Velvet Underground* is a somewhat thin read that makes the book in this respect lightweight, skimpy, frustrating. Sounes would no doubt argue that it's a biography, a telling of the whole life, not just the part of it that has music attached, and therefore not meant merely as a book of music criticism. This is fair enough, but doesn't excuse some lamentably flat writing. "It was a thrilling moment for Lou and his bandmates when their debut album finally reached the shops in the spring of 1967," is how he starts one chapter, enticingly.

► The main characters in Morrissey's debut novel, **List Of The Lost**, are called Ezra, Nails, Harri and Justy, which makes them sound like amusing woodland creatures. They are, in fact, relay runners on a college track team. One of the more surprising revelations in *Autobiography* was that Morrissey was a talented runner at school. What he actually knows about athletics, however, could probably be written on the back of a note from his mum asking for him to be excused PE class because of a nasty little cough or an ear infection.

For frankly unfathomable reasons, the book is set in Boston – the one in America, not Lincolnshire. Not that this would be apparent, however, either from description or dialogue. You would not have expected Morrissey overnight to have turned into a laureate of hardboiled Charlestown backchat, like George V Higgins or Dennis Lehane. At the same time, you wouldn't have expected these characters to sound so much like the cast of a *Carry On...* film, at least when they're not delivering improbably windy speeches that give voice to the author's myriad and increasingly demented obsessions.

Not Fade Away

Fondly remembered this month...

STEVE MACKAY

Stooges saxophonist

(1949-2015)

IGGY POP CAME to Steve Mackay for a specific reason. As the saxophonist recalled in an interview with French TV last year, Pop wanted him to play like Maceo Parker on LSD. “I knew what Iggy was talking about,” said Mackay. “We are free, and we are crazy, and we are a little bit afraid when we play.”

Mackay was drafted into the Stooges’ set-up in May 1970, just days before the band were due to record their second LP, *Fun House*. His abrasive style, rooted in a love of John Coltrane, Charlie Parker and King Curtis, proved an ideal fit for the band’s open-ended digression into free-form noise, mixing skronky jazz with distorted proto-punk. Mackay’s sax duly became a key texture of *Fun House*, helping to forge its status as a modern classic.

He began playing sax aged nine, going on to join a succession of Michigan bands during the British Invasion of the ’60s. By the time he met up with Pop, Mackay was a staple of avant-jazz outfit Carnal Kitchen. The Stooges association ended in late 1970, following the *Fun House* sessions and subsequent tour. It took more than 30 years before he returned, joining them for 2003’s reunion show at Coachella. He was invited to stay for the duration, touring with the group and playing on 2007’s *The Weirdness* and *Ready To Die* (2013).

The intervening years saw him briefly revive Carnal Kitchen and play guest spots with Violent Femmes (1986’s *The Blind Leading The Naked*), Andre Williams, Mike Watt and the Radon Ensemble, alongside various others, as well as issue a pair of solo albums. The second of these, 2011’s *Sometimes Like This I Talk*, featured Iggy Pop on lead-off single, “The Prisoner”.

In response to Mackay’s death from sepsis, Iggy took to Twitter to lead the tributes. “Steve was a classic ’60s American guy, full of generosity and love for anyone he met,” he wrote. “Every time he put his sax to his lips and honked, he lightened my road and brightened the whole world. He was a credit to his group and his generation.”



Mackay live at La Machine du Moulin Rouge, Paris, December 17, 2010

GAIL ZAPPA

Wife of Frank Zappa

(1945-2015)

Frank Zappa once said that it took just “a couple of minutes” to fall in love with Gail Sloatman when they first met in 1966. Then employed as a secretary at the Whisky A Go Go, Sloatman (who’d already cut a single with Kim Fowley as Bunny and Bear) was altogether less enamoured, likening the encounter

to “a vaccination that didn’t take”. The following year, however, the couple were married, upon which they set up a home and studio in Laurel Canyon. After Frank died in 1993, Gail became a fierce protector of his recorded legacy, creating the Zappa Family Trust and fighting lawsuits with various record companies, tribute bands and festivals that she believed were guilty of copyright infringement.

WILTON FELDER

Crusaders sax player

(1940-2015)

The Jazz Crusaders, featuring tenor sax player Wilton Felder, released 17 albums of explorative hard bop from 1961-1970. But it wasn’t until they pursued a more fusionist approach, as The Crusaders, that they began having commercial success, most memorably with 1979’s *Street Life*, co-produced by

Felder. He also doubled as a go-to bassist, playing on sessions for the Jackson Five (“I Want You Back”), Joni Mitchell (*For The Roses*), John Cale (*Paris 1919*) and Marvin Gaye (*Let’s Get It On*), among others.

CAREY LANDER

Camera Obscura keyboardist

(1982-2015)

Keyboardist and singer Carey Lander, who has died from a rare form of bone cancer, replaced Lindsay Boyd in Camera Obscura in 2002. She went on to become an integral part of the Glaswegians’ steady transformation from fey B&S stylists to consummate purveyors of lovelorn indie-pop. The last of the four albums Lander made with the quintet, 2013’s *Desire Lines*, was recorded after she’d been diagnosed with osteosarcoma of the leg. She continued to tour up until August this year.

PEGGY JONES

US guitarist aka ‘Lady Bo’

(1940-2015)

Struck by the spectacle of a young woman with a guitar, Bo Diddley drafted Peggy Jones into his band after meeting her at Harlem’s Apollo Theater in 1957. She served as his guitarist until 1961, playing and singing on such classics as “Hey! Bo Diddley”, “Road Runner” and “Aztec”, contributing all the parts to the latter. Christened ‘Lady Bo’ when she returned to Diddley in 1970, she fronted her own bands and handled percussion on Eric Burdon’s “San Franciscan Nights”.

AL ABRAMS

Motown press officer

(1941-2015)

Al Abrams played a crucial role in Motown’s rise from smalltime



Gail Zappa with husband Frank in 1972

BEN CAULEY

Trumpeter in The Bar-Kays

(1947-2015)

BEN CAULEY WAS a survivor in the truest sense. On December 10, 1967, he and his fellow bandmates in Stax soul group The Bar-Kays were on a flight to Madison, Wisconsin, when disaster struck. Their plane, which also carried Otis Redding and his valet, crashed into Lake Monona. The only person left alive, clutching a seat cushion for buoyancy while waiting for rescue, was Cauley. Stax never quite recovered from the tragedy. "The company was never the same to me after that," admitted co-founder Jim Stewart.

Cauley began as trumpeter in The Bar-Kays while still at Booker T Washington High School in Memphis. He turned pro in 1965 and, two years later, he and Jimmie King (guitar), Ronnie Caldwell (organ), Phalon Jones (sax), James Alexander (bass) and Carl Cunningham (drums) signed to Stax subsidiary Volt. They were quickly assigned the role of house band for the label, alongside Booker T & The MG's, and played on sides by Redding, Sam & Dave and Carla Thomas. The Bar-Kays also recorded in their own right, landing a Top 20 hit with infectious debut 45 "Soul Finger", a prominent feature of which was Cauley's exuberant brass.

Post-crash, Cauley and Alexander (who'd missed the fatal flight) formed a new version of the band. Arguably their greatest moment came when they backed Isaac Hayes on 1969's landmark LP, *Hot Buttered Soul*. The responsibility of looking after his young family led Cauley to quit in '71, though he continued to perform on sessions in Memphis, Muscle Shoals and Nashville.

In 1989 he suffered a massive stroke, requiring Cauley, who at first was given just three days to live, to completely re-learn how to walk and feed himself. Incredibly, his recovery was such that he was able to play Memphis clubs and venues well into the millennium.



The Bar-Kays
(Cauley, second
left) in 1967

operation to global phenomenon. Hired by Berry Gordy in 1959, he was tasked with securing media coverage and airplay for a mainly black roster in an era still marked by racial divisions. He invented the slogan 'The Sound Of Young America' and helped guide the careers of Stevie Wonder, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and more. "Al was very, very important in our progress," declared Martha Reeves.

ROBBIN THOMPSON

US singer-guitarist

(1949-2015)

Robbin Thompson first crossed paths with Bruce Springsteen in 1969, when their respective bands – Mercy Flight and Steel Mill – shared a bill in Richmond, Virginia. A few months later, Bruce asked him to join his outfit as a singer-guitarist. Thompson remained with Steel Mill until they split in 1971, then went solo. He issued the first of nine LPs in 1976 and, along with Steve Bassett, co-wrote "Sweet Virginia Breeze", now the official state song.

JIM DIAMOND

Scottish singer-songwriter

(1951-2015)

One of the most distinctive voices of

the '80s belonged to Scottish artist Jim Diamond, whose imploring tones first hit the mainstream with 1982's "I Won't Let You Down", recorded with Tony Hymas and Simon Phillips as PhD. He returned in solo guise, two years later, with the chart-topping "I Should Have Known Better", and scored another major success in 1986 with "Hi Ho Silver", the theme from TV series *Boon*. Diamond's most recent release was 2011's *City Of Soul*.

PHIL WOODS

Modern jazz saxophonist

(1931-2015)

No less an authority than Quincy Jones contends that, "Phil Woods was one of the greatest jazz alto-saxophone players to ever set foot on this planet." A major figure in the realm of modern jazz and an avid devotee of Charlie Parker,



Phil Woods
live in 1984

Woods began to embrace the limitless possibilities of bebop during the late '40s. By the following decade he was playing in the big bands of Jones, Dizzy Gillespie and Benny Goodman, earning the sobriquet "the New Bird" when Parker died in 1955 (he later married Parker's widow). Woods was known in populist circles for his lyrical solo on Billy Joel's "Just The Way You Are", in addition to Paul Simon's "Have A Good Time" and Steely Dan's "Doctor Wu".

BRYN MERRICK

Damned bassist

(1958-2015)

Bryn Merrick's induction into The Damned, replacing bassist Paul Gray, coincided with the most commercially successful phase of their career. Previously a member of Cardiff punk outfit Victimize, Merrick made his national television debut in 1984, when The Damned appeared on *The Young Ones*, and played on the following year's big-selling *Phantasmagoria* album, *Anything* (1986) and Top 3 hit, "Eloise". He left in 1989 and, in more recent times, took the role of BeeBee Shamone in a Ramones covers band called The Shamones.

FRANKIE FORD

US R'n'B singer

(1939-2015)

The 'New Orleans Dynamo' struck gold as a 19-year-old, when his cover of Huey 'Piano' Smith's "Sea Cruise" made the upper reaches of *Billboard* in 1959. The song clung to the charts for four months and sold more than a million copies. Ford, who also recorded at Cosimo Matassa's studio in New Orleans, struggled to repeat his success and his career lost momentum when he was drafted into the army in 1962.

SIMON COWE

Lindisfarne multi-instrumentalist

(1948-2015)

Much of Lindisfarne's rootsy flavour was provided by multi-instrumentalist Cowe, whose proficiency on guitar, mandolin, banjo and keys added a dash of exotica to their very English brand of prog-folk. Cowe co-founded the band in 1968 as The Downtown Faction, then Brethren, before the arrival of vocalist Alan Hull prompted a final name change. In 1973 he formed Jack The Lad, with bandmates Rod Clements and Ray Laidlaw, though he returned to Lindisfarne later in the decade, remaining until 1994. **ROB HUGHES**

Feedback...

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STRICTLY CLASSIFIEDS

I always like seeing your Classifieds pieces in *Instant Karma!*, showing old gig adverts from the *NME* or *Melody Maker*: occasionally I spot one that I was at. However, October *Uncut*'s September 1972 item contained a goodie, with the Windsor Arts Festival, a one-day celebration of the 'underground' right on Her Maj's doorstep. You can see from the poster who the main offenders were, but Mottleigh, The Masque Poets and Renaissance were also on the bill. Infuriatingly, I started the day at Windsor with a thumping headache. Fortunately, I must have been cured by various chemicals, as I later rejoiced in one of the most 'Underground' bills possible at that time. Brewers Droop were a typical heavy blues band formed by Ron Watts (of 100 Club fame), who did not yet number Mark Knopfler among their ranks, and while "Poets" and "Renaissance" suggested culture to a certain extent, you could argue that the second half of the bill is about the most extreme counter-culture-representative one then available. To prove the point, the Pink Fairies came on. Mind you, I reckon this was one of the handful of gigs they played with Mick Wayne in the lineup, which clearly did not suit the Fairies' faithful: he wasn't to last long. Trouble is, Home Park is next to the Royal Mile, and more or less backs on to Windsor Castle. This meant that on that day, there was a curfew of sorts, and there had been agreement that the music would stop at a decreed time – it may have been 10pm – to not disturb HM Queen too much. As it turned out, Hawkwind played the last proper set, having astutely swapped their headline spot, as when Arthur Brown subsequently took to the stage, the power was turned off. So, no real Kingdom Come, but they had enough gadgets and props (smoke machines, silly costumes and the like) to keep us amused for about 20 minutes, then we went home. Good fun!

Pete Watt, via email

...As a regular subscriber from the beginning, I love receiving *Uncut* through the post each month. I especially enjoy the Classifieds piece. A lot of those venues I visited in my youth and it brings back



Hawkwind in Copenhagen, 1972: members include (l-r) Simon King, Nik Turner, Lemmy, Del Dettmar (centre) and Stacia (far right)

many great gig memories. So, any chance you could perhaps expand it to a full page each month, or maybe publish a 'one-off Classifieds edition' just like your special editions on Dylan, The Beatles, Weller etc or like your most recent *History Of Rock* collections? It would be like a scrapbook of old gigs, bands and much-loved but now sadly gone pubs and venues.

Steve Rough, Barnsley, Yorks

FASTER THAN LIGHTNING

Dan Auerbach [*An Audience With...*, *October issue*] is rather impressed that Robert Plant, following a request to hear "Black Dog" having just done it, retorted: "We just played it, you cunt!" Quote Dan: "Robert is cool, he still has that fire, that youthful enthusiasm. He's a good role model for ageing gracefully in rock'n'roll." Really? I recall some years ago at St David's Hall, Cardiff, Richard Thompson, having just played the final notes of "1952 Vincent Black Lightning", being asked by someone who had clearly not been listening too hard to play "the motorcycle song", to which the great Richard's replied: "What, faster?" A much classier response, I'm sure most readers will agree.

John Walters, Swansea

DEAD TIRED

In September 1967, at the age of 14, I, along with two friends, hitchhiked into Hollywood to see what I believe was the Grateful Dead's first official show in Los Angeles, played at The Hollywood Bowl. The Jefferson Airplane were also there but Big Brother, who were also on the bill, never made it. I'll never forget how knocked we were; all three of us confirmed Dead Heads before there was such a thing. A few years later, I got what I jokingly believe was the first Grateful Dead tattoo; the band's name written above a full bicep of the Grim Reaper. Sadly for myself, the Dead became a tired act and by the '80s, as far as I was concerned, finished. Thank God for punk rock. Which brings me to this; I've asked *Uncut* before and I'll keep on asking, how about an article on Los Angeles's own X, one of the last great American bands. I would put their first four albums up against anybody's. Oh well.

David Dale, Sonoma, California

FAB FRUIT

Michael Bonner's interview with Paul McCartney [*October issue*] should be required reading for every aspiring interviewer. It is a model of unobtrusive engagement achieved through subtle and

perceptive probing of his subject. Despite covering familiar ground, Bonner resists the temptation to indulge in cute asides and, in doing so, he allows old stories to take on a new meaning. Bonner's self-effacing style allows McCartney to speak more freely and fully than ever before. As someone who has never been Sir Paul's biggest fan, but appreciates the significance of his legacy, I found it an utterly absorbing and refreshing read. The hallmark of a great interviewer is when the reader has to go back and check for the interviewer's name in the credits to see whose expertise delivered such insights. By turning his own volume down and tuning in so deftly to the words of his interviewee, Bonner shows himself to be an egoless interlocutor with the listening skills of an experienced counsellor. Some reviewers could also learn lessons from Bonner's approach – it's all about listening, not lecturing. No wonder McCartney gave him a banana and an orange as he left. Good listeners always yield fruit.

Willy Maley, Glasgow

HATS OFF TO HIPNESS

Congratulations! *Uncut* has risen to be the hippest music publication of modern time. Actually, your rise has been slow and steady but with

your coverage [September issue] of The Charlatans' 50th Anniversary reunion in Virginia City, Nevada, your rep has been cemented. I was there. And so was Bill Ham and his legendary light show, Van Dyke Parks, Peter Kramer, Nathan Terre, Mary Works and a host of other luminaries. It was the epicentre of hip for that magical weekend. And *Uncut* was the only publication to cover it. My hat's off to you.

Don Faruolo, Parsippany, NJ

STAR OF DAVID

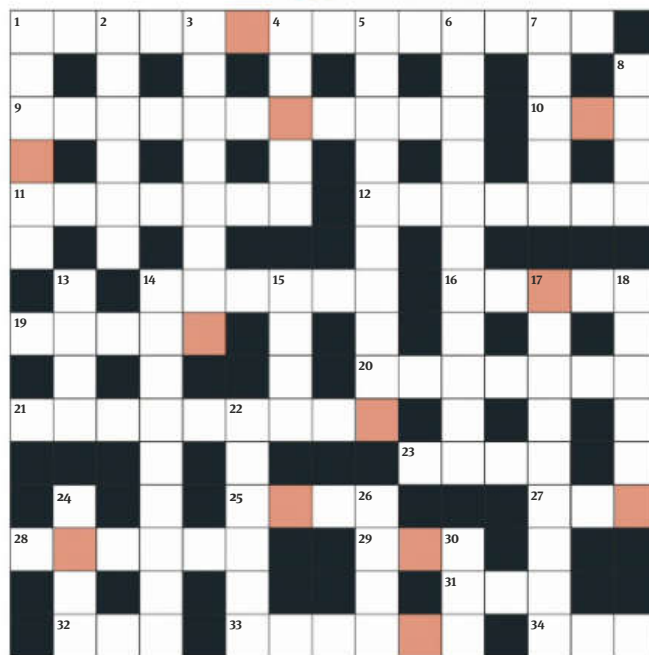
It was intriguing to read the full-page review and feature in May's edition of *Uncut* on David Corley's first release, *Available Light*. While I didn't get around to getting the CD during the summer, my interest was piqued when there were tracks from this record played on Roots Radio – a Belgian station that's often the soundtrack in my abode of an evening while reading the paper. To my surprise, in August it was announced that he was doing dates in Ireland and I got to see him on the last night of the tour. It was a treat to hear him up close in an intimate venue with an appreciative audience present. David had his own trio, including producer Hugh Christopher Brown, and was joined by a Dutch band called BJ's Wild Verband. Mr Corley's voice was a little the worse for wear as he had a late night on the previous date in Kilkenny and apologised about it on a couple of occasions. He seemed genuinely delighted and humbled with the warmth and appreciation that had greeted him and his music all week. It is also good to report he played a couple of new songs that haven't been recorded yet! Let's hope he travels back to this side of the Atlantic again in the next year or two with the second album before he disappears back into the woodwork. Well done to *Uncut* for highlighting this gem of a debut.

Pat Breen, Limerick

UNCOOL FOR CATS

I enjoyed the Squeeze article in *Uncut* 221, but am at a loss to see how no mention could be made of their excellent 1993 album, *Some Fantastic Place*. The LP not only equals their best work, but is one of the best of its era, having a truly timeless quality. It has the feel of a project where all powers were gathered together for one last throw of the dice, and in subsequent interviews you can sense the band's bafflement at its mediocre success. You'd expect *Uncut* to have drawn attention to this hidden gem, but no. A lost opportunity. Other than that, a great magazine as usual.

Steve Metcalfe, The Netherlands



HOW TO ENTER

The letters in the shaded squares form an anagram of a song by Nirvana. When you've worked out what it is, send your answer to: *Uncut* December 2015 Xword Comp, 8th floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU. The first correct entry picked at random will win a prize. Closing date: **Monday, November 23, 2015**. This competition is only open to European residents.

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 David Gilmour's music sounding out of key and roughly handled (6-4-4)
- 9 One singer on, perhaps, for a Booker T And The MG's instrumental (5-6)
- 10 Was (Not Was) giving us a bit of a scare with this 2008 return album (3)
- 11 "Wishing you were here, to end this misery," 1961 (7)
- 12+13 Neil Young has no more TV arrangements (7-4)
- 14+33A That's torn it somewhat. An album by Sonic Youth (6-6)
- 16 "There Must Be Thousands", or four at least, who'd heard of this new wave band (5)
- 19 Barrett Strong song from 1959, later covered by The Beatles and Bern Elliott (5)
- 20 "So I looked at the scenery, she read her magazine," 1972 (7)
- 21 Urban-dwelling Jam song (2-3-4)
- 23+32A The Pet Shop Boys were very much in the wrong to release this (3-1-3)
- 25 Austrian soup stirrers (4)
- 27 "Steal My Sunshine" alt. rockers who were partly stolen themselves (3)
- 28 Band who named themselves after Harry Dean Stanton's character in *Paris, Texas* (6)
- 29 Their hits include "No Scrubs" and "Unpretty" (3)
- 31 Their 21st studio album, released this year, was *A Conspiracy Of Stars* (3)
- 32 (See 23 across)
- 33 (See 14 across)
- 34 Support act at Cream's 1968 farewell concert at The Royal Albert Hall (3)

ANSWERS: TAKE 221

ACROSS

- 1 Pretty Things, 9 Night Beat, 10 One Love, 11+28 Meat Loaf, 12 Haim, 16 Oh Diane, 17 Sky, 18 Heroes, 20+19D Simple Songs, 21+23D

- Spanish Harlem, 26+27D Do Or Die, 29 Star, 31 Indigo, 32 Do It, 33 Hell, 34 Fresh Cream.

DOWN

- 1 Pink Moon, 2+8A England Dan, 3 Toto, 4 Teenage Head, 5 Into My Arms, 6 Greece, 7+14A Angel Eyes, 8 Drones,

CLUES DOWN

- 1+2D Willard Grant Conspiracy album. Check it out at the checkout (6-3-3)
- 3 US guitarist famed for his 1958 track "Rumble" (4-4)
- 4 (See 18 down)
- 5 "Slipping into stockings, stepping into shoes," 1971 (7-3)
- 6 At last asking for a Paolo Nutini song (4-7)
- 7 An old-style message from earlier Stereophonics (5)
- 8 Both Elvis Presley and Ed Sheeran advised not to take part in a number (4)
- 13 (See 12 across)
- 14 Somehow even heard an album by Throwing Muses (3-6)
- 15 REM album *New Adventures In* _____ (2-2)
- 17 Beast of a lad appearing on a Ramones album (6-3)
- 18+4D Rod hasn't any remixes coming from white South African singer on Atlantic label (6-5)
- 22 Not so far away from the sound of Joy Division (6)
- 24 She got one in the eye from The Goo Goo Dolls (4)
- 26 Album that put an end to The Eric Burdon Band (4)
- 30 Indie band from Leeds who chewed over their career in *Showbiz* (3)

- 13 Carpet, 15 Skids, 20+24A Strange Fruit, 22 Parish, 25 I Will, 30 Time.

HIDDEN ANSWER

"Blue Sway"

XWORD COMPILED BY:

Trevor Hungerford

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MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Billy Gibbons

The ZZ Top man catalogues his love of blues and country, and the time he toured with 'regular guy' Jimi Hendrix



An introduction to the blues

Jimmy Reed

Honey, Don't Let Me Go 1957

I was probably five when I first heard this. We had a housekeeper that loved listening to the blues, and when our mom would go out of the house we'd beg her to stop at the record store. We would always ask the housekeeper which record to buy. She was very quick to point out the favourite blues number of the week. On the surface, this song sounds quite simple, but the interplay between the two guitars is very sophisticated.



A huge inspiration

The Jimi Hendrix Experience

Are You Experienced 1967

Shortly after I heard this, I got a phone call that said, "There's a new tour that's going around, featuring a guy by the name Jimi Hendrix." I said, "Yeah, I'm quite familiar with Jimi Hendrix." And they said, "Well, [Gibbons' band] The Moving Sidewalks have been hired to join the tour." I was 17 and ready to rock! What a great guy Hendrix was, just a regular guy. It was quite the opposite when he hit the stage – he turned it on.

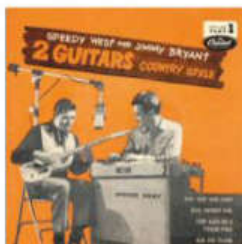


A Texas blues classic

The Nightcaps

Wine, Wine, Wine 1959

A very popular regional release in Texas back in the '60s was "Wine, Wine, Wine", by a band out of Dallas called The Nightcaps. The whole [Wine, Wine, Wine] album still has some of the best blues chops, and these were five white guys from Dallas. I don't know what their inspiration was. It languished as kind of a quiet sleeper in the Texas area for years, then it finally exploded worldwide. Somebody picked it up, and it's still out there.



An instrumental country wonder

Speedy West and Jimmy Bryant

2 Guitars Country Style 1954

Jimmy Bryant brought his lightning-speed work on his famous Telecaster, and of course Speedy West had his pedal-steel guitar. The two of them worked long hours to zero in on some pretty sophisticated arrangements for this album. On the cover, Jimmy Bryant is sitting comfortably next to Speedy West, who's sitting behind his multi-string steel guitar – that is just a wonder.



A single from a Texan inspiration

Sir Douglas Quintet

She's About A Mover 1965

There are so many great, great records by Doug Sahm. This was the song that really sent him on his way. He'd been making records for years, but when "She's About A Mover" hit in 1965, he was up and running. Doug crossed over into so many different styles; he was a rocker, he was a rhythm and blueser, he was even country. He played steel guitar, he played electric guitar, he played fiddle, he did so much.



One of my favourite country songs

George Jones

He Stopped Loving Her Today 1980

There was a famous radio station in Austin, Texas called KOKE-FM, and it was kind of an 'anything goes' format. One of my old pals was the cornerstone afternoon DJ, Mr Joe Gracey, and he would come out of a Howlin' Wolf track and then follow it with The Rolling Stones and then into George Jones. To hear George any time was uplifting. He had a vocal range that would allow him to soar up into the stratosphere.



A recent purchase

Muddy Waters

The Best Of Muddy Waters 1957

We got fortunate recently – within the last month I found an unopened mint copy of Muddy Waters' first LP, released on the Chess label, from back in the '50s. It's got the famous album cover with his silhouette. One of my favourite tracks from his early period is "Rollin' Stone". We already had an opened copy of this album, so we're thinking of framing this unopened version, putting it on the wall and just staring at it. It's quite the rare one.



A song that mystifies me

The Rolling Stones

Start Me Up 1981

This track is continually a mystery. I've even talked with Keith Richards about it, because the introduction, when the band is just starting to kick in, it's difficult to pinpoint where the downbeat exists. Charlie Watts seemingly comes in backwards and miraculously turns it around. Keith pointed out another great record that also has that peculiar 'can't find the downbeat' intro, "Crackin' Up" by Bo Diddley. I would defy anyone to find the downbeat before the band kicks in!

Billy Gibbons' solo album, *Perfectamundo*, is released by Concord Records on November 6

IN NEXT MONTH'S UNCUT:

"If I'd carried on drinking, I don't think I'd still be here today..."

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